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# SAMUEL JOHNSON

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VOLUME VIII

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MRS. MONTAGU

Works

# LIVES OF THE POETS

By SAMUEL JOHNSON

PAFRAETS BOOK COMPANY
TROY NEW YORK

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# DENHAM

OF sir John Denham very little is known but what is related of him by Wood, or by himself.

He was born at Dublin, 1615[a]; the only son of sir John Denham, of Little Horsley, in Essex, then chief baron of the exchequer in Ireland, and of Eleanor, daughter of sir Garret More, baron of Mellefont.

Two years afterwards, his father, being made one of the barons of the exchequer in England, brought him away from his native country, and educated him in London.

In 1631 he was sent to Oxford, where he was considered "as a dreaming young man, given more to dice and cards than study:" and, therefore, gave no prognosticks of his future eminence; nor was suspected to conceal, under sluggishness and laxity, a genius born to improve the literature of his country.

When he was, three years afterwards, removed to Lincoln's inn, he prosecuted the common law with sufficient appearance of application; yet did not lose his propensity to cards and dice; but was very often plundered by gamesters.

[a] In Hamilton's memoirs of count Grammont, sir John Denham is said to have been seventy-nine, when he married Miss Brook, about the year 1664; according to which statement he was born in 1585. But Dr. Johnson, who has followed Wood, is right. He entered Trinity college, Oxford, at the age of sixteen, in 1631, as appears by the following entry, which I copied from the matriculation book.

Trin. Coll.

"1631. Nov. 18. Johannes Denham, Essex. filius J. Denham de Horsley-parva in com. prædict. militis, annos natus 16." MALONE.

Being severely reproved for this folly, he professed, and, perhaps, believed, himself reclaimed; and, to testify the sincerity of his repentance, wrote and published an Essay upon Gaming.

He seems to have divided his studies between law and poetry; for, in 1636, he translated the second book of the Æneid.

Two years after, his father died; and then, notwithstanding his resolutions and professions, he returned again to the vice of gaming, and lost several thousand pounds that had been left him.

In 1641, he published the Sophy. This seems to have given him his first hold of the publick attention; for Waller remarked, "that he broke out like the Irish rebellion, three score thousand strong, when nobody was aware, or in the least suspected it:" an observation which could have had no propriety had his poetical abilities been known before.

He was after that pricked for sheriff of Surrey, and made governour of Farnham castle for the king; but he soon resigned that charge, and retreated to Oxford, where, in 1643, he published Cooper's Hill.

This poem had such reputation as to excite the common artifice by which envy degrades excellence. A report was spread, that the performance was not his own, but that he had bought it of a vicar for forty pounds. The same attempt was made to rob Addison of his Cato, and Pope of his Essay on Criticism.

In 1647, the distresses of the royal family required him to engage in more dangerous employments. He

was intrusted, by the queen, with a message to the king; and, by whatever means, so far softened the ferocity of Hugh Peters, that, by his intercession, admission was procured. Of the king's condescension he has given an account in the dedication of his works.

He was, afterwards, employed in carrying on the king's correspondence; and, as he says, discharged this office with great safety to the royalists: and, being accidentally discovered by the adverse party's knowledge of Mr. Cowley's hand, he escaped happily both for himself and his friends.

He was yet engaged in a greater undertaking. In April, 1648, he conveyed James, the duke of York, from London into France, and delivered him there to the queen and prince of Wales. This year he published his translation of Cato Major.

He now resided in France, as one of the followers of the exiled king; and, to divert the melancholy of their condition, was sometimes enjoined by his master to write occasional verses; one of which amusements was probably his ode, or song, upon the Embassy to Poland, by which he and lord Crofts procured a contribution of ten thousand pounds from the Scotch, that wandered over the kingdom. Poland was, at that time, very much frequented by itinerant traders, who, in a country of very little commerce and of great extent, where every man resided on his own estate, contributed very much to the accommodation of life, by bringing to every man's house those little necessaries which it was

very inconvenient to want, and very troublesome to fetch. I have formerly read, without much reflection, of the multitude of Scotchmen that travelled with their wares in Poland; and that their numbers were not small, the success of this negotiation gives sufficient evidence.

About this time, what estate the war and the gamesters had left him was sold, by order of the parliament; and when, in 1652, he returned to England, he was entertained by the earl of Pembroke.

Of the next years of his life there is no account. At the restoration he obtained that which many missed, the reward of his loyalty; being made surveyor of the king's buildings, and dignified with the order of the Bath. He seems now to have learned some attention to money; for Wood says, that he got by this place seven thousand pounds.

After the restoration, he wrote the poem on Prudence and Justice, and, perhaps, some of his other pieces; and as he appears, whenever any serious question comes before him, to have been a man of piety, he consecrated his poetical powers to religion, and made a metrical version of the psalms of David. In this attempt he has failed; but in sacred poetry who has succeeded?

It might be hoped that the favour of his master, and esteem of the publick, would now make him happy. But human felicity is short and uncertain; a second marriage brought upon him so much disquiet, as, for a time, disordered his understanding; and Butler lampooned him for his lunacy. I know

not whether the malignant lines were then made publick, nor what provocation incited Butler to do that which no provocation can excuse.

His phrensy lasted not long[b]; and he seems to have regained his full force of mind; for he wrote afterwards his excellent poem upon the death of Cowley, whom he was not long to survive; for, on the 19th of March, 1668, he was buried by his side.

Denham is deservedly considered as one of the fathers of English poetry. "Denham and Waller," says Prior, "improved our versification, and Dryden perfected it." He has given specimens of various compositions, descriptive, ludicrous, didactick, and sublime.

He appears to have had, in common with almost all mankind, the ambition of being, upon proper occasions, *a merry fellow*, and, in common with most of them, to have been by nature, or by early habits, debarred from it. Nothing is less exhilarating than the ludicrousness of Denham; he does not fail for want of efforts; he is familiar, he is gross; but he is never merry, unless the Speech against Peace in the close Committee be excepted. For grave burlesque, however, his imitation of Davenant shows him to have been well qualified.

Of his more elevated occasional poems, there is, perhaps, none that does not deserve commendation.

[b] In the ninth and tenth chapters of the Memoires de Grammont, in Andrew Marvell's works, and in Aubrey's letters, ii. 319, many scandalous anecdotes respecting Denham, are reported. Ed.

In the verses to Fletcher, we have an image that has since been often adopted[c]:

> But whither am I stray'd? I need not raise
> Trophies to thee from other men's dispraise;
> Nor is thy fame on lesser ruins built,
> Nor need thy juster title the foul guilt.
> Of eastern kings, who, to secure their reign,
> Must have their brothers, sons, and kindred, slain.

After Denham, Orrery, in one of his prologues,

> Poets are sultans, if they had their will;
> For ev'ry author would his brother kill.

And Pope,

> Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
> Bear like the Turk no brother near the throne.

But this is not the best of his little pieces: it is excelled by his poem to Fanshaw, and his elegy on Cowley.

His praise of Fanshaw's version of Guarini contains a very sprightly and judicious character of a good translator:

> That servile path thou nobly dost decline,
> Of tracing word by word and line by line.
> Those are the labour'd births of slavish brains,
> Not the effect of poetry but pains;
> Cheap vulgar arts, whose narrowness affords
> No flight for thoughts, but poorly stick at words,
> A new and nobler way thou dost pursue,
> To make translations and translators too,
> They but preserve the ashes; thou the flame,
> True to his sense, but truer to his fame.

[c] It is remarkable that Johnson should not have recollected, that this image is to be found in Bacon. Aristoteles, more otthomannorum, regnare se haud tuto posse putabat, nisi fratres suos omnes contrucidasset. De Augment. Scient. lib. 3.

The excellence of these lines is greater, as the truth which they contain was not, at that time, generally known.

His poem on the death of Cowley was his last, and, among his shorter works, his best performance: the numbers are musical, and the thoughts are just.

Cooper's Hill is the work that confers upon him the rank and dignity of an original author. He seems to have been, at least among us, the author of a species of composition that may be denominated *local poetry*, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape, to be poetically described with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection, or incidental meditation.

To trace a new scheme of poetry, has, in itself, a very high claim to praise, and its praise is yet more, when it is apparently copied by Garth and Pope[d]; after whose names little will be gained by an enumeration of smaller poets, that have left scarcely a corner of the island not dignified either by rhyme or blank verse.

Cooper's Hill, if it be maliciously inspected, will not be found without its faults. The digressions are too long, the morality too frequent, and the sentiments, sometimes, such as will not bear a rigorous inquiry.

The four verses, which, since Dryden has com-

[d] By Garth, in his poem on Claremont: and by Pope, in his Windsor Forest.

mended them, almost every writer for a century past has imitated, are generally known:

> O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
> My great example, as it is my theme!
> Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

The lines, are, in themselves, not perfect; for most of the words, thus artfully opposed, are to be understood simply on one side of the comparison, and metaphorically on the other; and, if there be any language which does not express intellectual operations by material images, into that language they cannot be translated. But so much meaning is comprised in so few words; the particulars of resemblance are so perspicaciously collected, and every mode of excellence separated from its adjacent fault by so nice a line of limitation; the different parts of the sentence are so accurately adjusted; and the flow of the last couplet is so smooth and sweet; that the passage, however celebrated, has not been praised above its merit. It has beauty peculiar to itself, and must be numbered among those felicities which cannot be produced at will by wit and labour, but must rise unexpectedly in some hour propitious to poetry.

He appears to have been one of the first that understood the necessity of emancipating translation from the drudgery of counting lines, and interpreting single words. How much this servile practice obscured the clearest, and deformed the most beautiful parts of the ancient authors, may be discovered

by a perusal of our earlier versions; some of them are the works of men well qualified, not only by critical knowledge, but by poetical genius, who yet, by a mistaken ambition of exactness, degraded, at once, their originals and themselves.

Denham saw the better way, but has not pursued it with great success. His versions of Virgil are not pleasing; but they taught Dryden to please better. His poetical imitation of Tully on Old Age has neither the clearness of prose, nor the sprightliness of poetry.

The "strength of Denham," which Pope so emphatically mentions, is to be found in many lines and couplets, which convey much meaning in few words, and exhibit the sentiment with more weight than bulk.

### On the Thames.

Though with those streams he no resemblance hold,
Whose foam is amber, and their gravel gold;
His genuine and less guilty wealth t' explore,
Search not his bottom, but survey his shore.

### On Strafford.

His wisdom such, at once, it did appear
Three kingdoms' wonder, and three kingdoms' fear.
While single he stood forth, and seem'd, although
Each had an army, as an equal foe;
Such was his force of eloquence to make
The hearers more concern'd than he that spake:
Each seem'd to act that part he came to see,
And none was more a looker-on than he;
So did he move our passions, some were known
To wish, for the defence, the crime their own.
Now private pity strove with public hate,
Reason with rage, and eloquence with fate.

## DENHAM

### On Cowley.

To him no author was unknown,
Yet what he wrote was all his own;
Horace's wit, and Virgil's state,
He did not steal, but emulate!
And, when he would like them appear,
Their garb, but not their clothes, did wear.

As one of Denham's principal claims to the regard of posterity arises from his improvement of our numbers, his versification ought to be considered. It will afford that pleasure which arises from the observation of a man of judgment naturally right, forsaking bad copies by degrees, and advancing towards a better practice, as he gains more confidence in himself.

In his translation of Virgil, written when he was about twenty-one years old, may be still found the old manner of continuing the sense ungracefully from verse to verse:

Then all those
Who in the dark our fury did escape,
Returning, know our borrow'd arms, and shape,
And differing dialect; then their numbers swell
And grow upon us; first Chorœbus fell
Before Minerva's altar; next did bleed
Just Ripheus, whom no Trojan did exceed
In virtue, yet the gods his fate decreed.
Then Hypanis and Dymas, wounded by
Their friends; nor thee, Pantheus, thy piety,
Nor consecrated mitre, from the same
Ill fate could save; my country's funeral flame
And Troy's cold ashes I attest, and call
To witness for myself, that in their fall
No foes, no death, nor danger, I declin'd,
Did, and deserv'd no less, my fate to find.

From this kind of concatenated metre he afterwards refrained, and taught his followers the art of concluding their sense in couplets; which has, perhaps, been with rather too much constancy pursued.

This passage exhibits one of those triplets which are not unfrequent in this first essay, but which it is to be supposed his maturer judgment disapproved, since, in his latter works, he has totally foreborne them.

His rhymes are such as seem found without difficulty, by following the sense; and are, for the most part, as exact, at least, as those of other poets, though now and then the reader is shifted off with what he can get:

> O how *transform'd!*
> How much unlike that Hector, who *return'd*
> Clad in Achilles' spoils!

And again:

> From thence a thousand lesser poets *sprung*
> Like petty princes from the fall of *Rome.*

Sometimes the weight of rhyme is laid upon a word too feeble to sustain it:

> Troy confounded falls
> From all her glories: if it might have stood
> By any power, by this right hand it *shou'd.*
> —— And though my outward state misfortune *hath*
> Deprest thus low, it cannot reach my faith.
> —— Thus, by his fraud and our own faith o'ercome,
> A feigned tear destroys us, against *whom*
> Tydides nor Achilles could prevail,
> Nor ten years' conflict, nor a thousand sail.

He is not very careful to vary the ends of his verses; in one passage the word *die* rhymes three couplets in six.

Most of these petty faults are in his first productions, when he was less skilful, or, at least, less dexterous in the use of words; and though they had been more frequent, they could only have lessened the grace, not the strength of his composition. He is one of the writers that improved our taste, and advanced our language, and whom we ought, therefore, to read with gratitude, though, having done much, he left much to do.

# MILTON

THE life of Milton has been already written in so many forms, and with such minute inquiry, that I might, perhaps, more properly have contented myself with the addition of a few notes on Mr. Fenton's elegant Abridgement, but that a new narrative was thought necessary to the uniformity of this edition.

John Milton was, by birth, a gentleman, descended from the proprietors of Milton, near Thame, in Oxfordshire, one of whom forfeited his estate in the times of York and Lancaster. Which side he took I know not; his descendant inherited no veneration for the *white rose*.

His grandfather, John, was keeper of the forest of Shotover, a zealous papist, who disinherited his son, because he had forsaken the religion of his ancestors.

His father, John, who was the son disinherited, had recourse, for his support, to the profession of a scrivener. He was a man eminent for his skill in musick, many of his compositions being still to be found; and his reputation in his profession was such, that he grew rich, and retired to an estate. He had, probably, more than common literature, as his son addresses him in one of his most elaborate Latin poems. He married a gentlewoman of the name of Caston, a Welsh family, by whom he had two sons, John, the poet, and Christopher, who studied the law, and adhered, as the law taught him, to the king's party, for which he was awhile persecuted,

but having, by his brother's interest, obtained permission to live in quiet, he supported himself so honourably by chamber practice, that, soon after the accession of king James, he was knighted, and made a judge; but, his constitution being too weak for business, he retired before any disreputable compliances became necessary.

He had, likewise, a daughter, Anne, whom he married with a considerable fortune, to Edward Philips, who came from Shrewsbury, and rose in the crown office to be secondary: by him she had two sons, John and Edward, who were educated by the poet, and from whom is derived the only authentick account of his domestick manners.

John, the poet, was born in his father's house, at the Spread-eagle, in Bread street, Dec. 9, 1608, between six and seven in the morning. His father appears to have been very solicitous about his education; for he was instructed, at first, by private tuition, under the care of Thomas Young, who was afterwards chaplain to the English merchants at Hamburgh, and of whom we have reason to think well, since his scholar considered him as worthy of an epistolary elegy.

He was then sent to St. Paul's school, under the care of Mr. Gill; and removed, in the beginning of his sixteenth year, to Christ's college in Cambridge, where he entered a sizar[e], Feb. 12, 1624.

[e] In this assertion Dr. Johnson was mistaken. Milton was admitted a pensioner, and not a sizar, as will appear by the following extract from the college register: "Johannes Milton, Londinensis, filius Johannis,

He was, at this time, eminently skilled in the Latin tongue; and he himself, by annexing the dates to his first compositions, a boast of which the learned Politian had given him an example, seems to commend the earliness of his own proficiency to the notice of posterity. But the products of his vernal fertility have been surpassed by many, and particularly by his contemporary Cowley. Of the powers of the mind it is difficult to form an estimate: many have excelled Milton in their first essays, who never rose to works like Paradise Lost.

At fifteen, a date which he uses till he is sixteen, he translated or versified two psalms, 114 and 136, which he thought worthy of the publick eye; but they raise no great expectations: they would, in any numerous school, have obtained praise, but not excited wonder.

Many of his elegies appear to have been written in his eighteenth year, by which it appears that he had then read the Roman authors with very nice discernment. I once heard Mr. Hampton, the translator of Polybius, remark, what I think is true, that Milton was the first Englishman who, after the revival of letters, wrote Latin verses with classick elegance. If any exceptions can be made, they are very few: Haddon and Ascham, the pride of Elizabeth's reign, however they have succeeded in prose, no sooner attempt verse than they provoke derision. If

institutus fuit in literarum elementis sub Mag'ro Gill Gymnasii Paulini præfecto, admissus est *Pensionarius Minor*, Feb. 12°, 1624, sub M'ro Chappell, solvitq. pro Ingr. 0*l.* 10*s.* 0*d.*" R.

we produced any thing worthy of notice before the elegies of Milton, it was, perhaps, Alabaster's Roxana[f].

Of the exercises which the rules of the university required, some were published by him in his maturer years. They had been undoubtedly applauded; for they were such as few can perform; yet there is reason to suspect that he was regarded in his college with no great fondness. That he obtained no fellowship is certain; but the unkindness with which he was treated, was not merely negative. I am ashamed to relate what I fear is true, that Milton was one of the last students in either university, that suffered the publick indignity of corporal correction[g].

It was, in the violence of controversial hostility, objected to him, that he was expelled: this he steadily denies, and it was apparently not true; but it seems plain, from his own verses to Diodati, that he had incurred rustication, a temporary dismission into the country, with, perhaps, the loss of a term:

> Me tenet urbs, reflua quam Thamesis alluit unda,
> Meque nec invitum patria dulcis habet.
> Jam nec arundiferum mihi cura revisere Camum,
> Nec dudum *vetiti* me *laris* angit amor.
> Nec duri libet usque minas perferre magistri,
> Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.
> Si sit hoc *exilium* patrios adiise penates,
> Et vacuum curis otia grata sequi,
> Non ego vel *profugi* nomen sortemve recuso,
> Lætus et *exilii* conditione fruor.

I cannot find any meaning but this, which even kindness and reverence can give to the term "vetiti

[f] Published 1632. R.

[g] On this subject, see Dr. Symons's Life of Milton, 71, 72. Ed.

laris," a habitation from which he is excluded; or how *exile* can be otherwise interpreted. He declares yet more, that he is weary of enduring "the threats of a rigorous master, and something else, which a temper like his cannot undergo." What was more than threat was probably punishment. This poem, which mentions his exile, proves, likewise, that it was not perpetual; for it concludes with a resolution of returning some time to Cambridge. And it may be conjectured, from the willingness with which he has perpetuated the memory of his exile, that its cause was such as gave him no shame.

He took both the usual degrees; that of bachelor in 1628, and that of master in 1632; but he left the university with no kindness for its institution, alienated either by the injudicious severity of his governours, or his own captious perverseness. The cause cannot now be known, but the effect appears in his writings. His scheme of education, inscribed to Hartlib, supersedes all academical instruction, being intended to comprise the whole time which men usually spend in literature, from their entrance upon grammar, "till they proceed, as it is called, masters of arts." And in his discourse on the likeliest way to remove Hirelings out of the Church, he ingeniously proposes, that "the profits of the lands forfeited by the act for superstitious uses should be applied to such academies all over the land, where languages and arts may be taught together; so that youth may be, at once, brought up to a competency of learning and an honest trade, by which means

such of them as had the gift, being enabled to support themselves, without tithes, by the latter, may, by the help of the former, become worthy preachers."

One of his objections to academical education, as it was then conducted, is, that men designed for orders in the church were permitted to act plays, "writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antick and dishonest gestures of Trincalos[g], buffoons, and bawds, prostituting the shame of that ministry which they had, or were near having, to the eyes of courtiers and court ladies, their grooms and mademoiselles."

This is sufficiently peevish in a man, who, when he mentions his exile from the college, relates, with great luxuriance, the compensation which the pleasures of the theatre afford him. Plays were, therefore, only criminal when they were acted by academicks.

He went to the university with a design of entering into the church, but in time altered his mind; for he declared, that whoever became a clergyman must "subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that could retch, he must straight perjure himself. He thought it better to prefer a blameless silence, before the office

[g] By the mention of this name, he evidently refers to Albumazar, acted at Cambridge, in 1614. Ignoramus, and other plays were performed at the same time. The practice was then very frequent. The last dramatick performance at either university, was the Grateful Fair, written by Christopher Smart, and represented at Pembroke College, Cambridge, about 1747. R.

of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing."

These expressions are, I find, applied to the subscription of the articles; but it seems more probable that they relate to canonical obedience. I know not any of the articles which seem to thwart his opinions; but the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation.

His unwillingness to engage in the ministry, perhaps not yet advanced to a settled resolution of declining it, appears in a letter to one of his friends, who had reproved his suspended and dilatory life, which he seems to have imputed to an insatiable curiosity, and fantastick luxury of various knowledge. To this he writes a cool and plausible answer, in which he endeavours to persuade him, that the delay proceeds not from the delights of desultory study, but from the desire of obtaining more fitness for his task; and that he goes on, "not taking thought of being late, so it gives advantage to be more fit."

When he left the university he returned to his father, then residing at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, with whom he lived five years; in which time he is said to have read all the Greek and Latin writers. With what limitations this universality is to be understood, who shall inform us?

It might be supposed, that he who read so much should have done nothing else; but Milton found time to write the Masque of Comus, which was presented at Ludlow, then the residence of the lord president of Wales, in 1634; and had the honour of

being acted by the earl of Bridgewater's sons and daughter. The fiction is derived from Homer's Circe[h]; but we never can refuse to any modern the liberty of borrowing from Homer:

> —— "a quo ceu fonte perenni
> Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis."

His next production was Lycidas, an elegy, written in 1637, on the death of Mr. King, the son of sir John King, secretary for Ireland in the time of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. King was much a favourite at Cambridge, and many of the wits joined

[h] It has, nevertheless, its foundation in reality. The earl of Bridgewater, being president of Wales, in the year 1634, had his residence at Ludlow castle, in Shropshire, at which time lord Brackly and Mr. Egerton, his sons, and lady Alice Egerton, his daughter, passing through a place called the Haywood forest, or Haywood, in Herefordshire, were benighted, and the lady for a short time lost: this accident, being related to their father upon their arrival at his castle, Milton, at the request of his friend, Henry Lawes, who taught music in the family, wrote this masque. Lawes set it to music, and it was acted on Michaelmas night: the two brothers, the young lady, and Lawes himself, bearing each a part in the representation.

The lady Alice Egerton became afterwards the wife of the earl of Carbury, who, at his seat called Golden grove, in Caermarthenshire, harboured Dr. Jeremy Taylor in the time of the usurpation. Among the doctor's sermons is one on her death, in which her character is finely portrayed. Her sister, lady Mary, was given in marriage to lord Herbert, of Cherbury.

Notwithstanding Dr. Johnson's assertion, that the fiction is derived from Homer's Circe, it may be conjectured, that it was rather taken from the Comus of Erycius Puteanus, in which, under the fiction of a dream, the characters of Comus and his attendants are delineated, and the delights of sensualists exposed and reprobated. This little tract was published at Louvain, in 1611, and afterwards at Oxford, in 1634, the very year in which Milton's Comus was written. H.

Milton evidently was indebted to the Old Wives' Tale of George Peele for the plan of Comus. R.

to do honour to his memory. Milton's acquaintance with the Italian writers may be discovered by a mixture of longer and shorter verses, according to the rules of Tuscan poetry, and his malignity to the church by some lines which are interpreted as threatening its extermination.

He is supposed about this time to have written his Arcades; for, while he lived at Horton, he used sometimes to steal from his studies a few days, which he spent at Harefield, the house of the countess dowager of Derby, where the Arcades made part of a dramatick entertainment.

He began now to grow weary of the country, and had some purpose of taking chambers in the inns of court, when the death of his mother set him at liberty to travel, for which he obtained his father's consent, and sir Henry Wotton's directions; with the celebrated precept of prudence, "i pensieri stretti, ed il viso sciolto;" thoughts close, and looks loose.

In 1638 he left England, and went first to Paris; where, by the favour of lord Scudamore, he had the opportunity of visiting Grotius, then residing at the French court, as ambassadour from Christina of Sweden. From Paris he hasted into Italy, of which he had, with particular diligence, studied the language and literature; and, though he seems to have intended a very quick perambulation of the country, staid two months at Florence; where he found his way into the academies, and produced his compositions with such applause, as appears to have exalted

him in his own opinion, and confirmed him in the hope, that, "by labour and intense study, which," says he, "I take to be my portion in this life, joined with a strong propensity of nature," he might "leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die."

It appears, in all his writings, that he had the usual concomitant of great abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself, perhaps not without some contempt of others; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much, and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal; as he set its value high, and considered his mention of a name, as a security against the waste of time, and a certain preservative from oblivion.

At Florence he could not, indeed, complain that his merit wanted distinction: Carlo Dati presented him with an encomiastick inscription, in the tumid lapidary style; and Francini wrote him an ode, of which the first stanza is only empty noise; the rest are, perhaps, too diffuse on common topicks; but the last is natural and beautiful.

From Florence he went to Sienna, and from Sienna to Rome, where he was again received with kindness by the learned and the great. Holstenius, the keeper of the vatican library, who had resided three years at Oxford, introduced him to cardinal Barberini; and he, at a musical entertainment, waited for him at the door, and led him by the hand into the assembly. Here Selvaggi praised him in a distich, and Salsilli in a tetrastick; neither of them of much value. The Italians were gainers by this literary com-

merce; for the encomiums with which Milton repaid Salsilli, though not secure against a stern grammarian, turn the balance indisputably in Milton's favour.

Of these Italian testimonies, poor as they are, he was proud enough to publish them before his poems; though he says, he cannot be suspected but to have known that they were said, "non tam de se, quam supra se."

At Rome, as at Florence, he staid only two months; a time, indeed, sufficient, if he desired only to ramble with an explainer of its antiquities, or to view palaces and count pictures; but certainly too short for the contemplation of learning, policy, or manners.

From Rome he passed on to Naples in company of a hermit, a companion from whom little could be expected; yet to him Milton owed his introduction to Manso, marquis of Villa, who had been before the patron of Tasso. Manso was enough delighted with his accomplishments to honour him with a sorry distich, in which he commends him for every thing but his religion: and Milton, in return, addressed him in a Latin poem, which must have raised an high opinion of English elegance and literature.

His purpose was now to have visited Sicily and Greece; but, hearing of the differences between the king and parliament, he thought it proper to hasten home, rather than pass his life in foreign amusements, while his countrymen were contending for their rights. He, therefore, came back to Rome, though the merchants informed him of plots laid against him by the jesuits, for the liberty of his con-

versations on religion. He had sense enough to judge that there was no danger, and, therefore, kept on his way, and acted as before, neither obtruding nor shunning controversy. He had, perhaps, given some offence by visiting Galileo, then a prisoner in the inquisition for philosophicial heresy; and at Naples he was told by Manso, that, by his declarations on religious questions, he had excluded himself from some distinctions which he should otherwise have paid him. But such conduct, though it did not please, was yet sufficiently safe; and Milton staid two months more at Rome, and went on to Florence without molestation.

From Florence he visited Lucca. He afterwards went to Venice; and, having sent away a collection of musick and other books, travelled to Geneva, which he, probably, considered as the metropolis of orthodoxy.

Here he reposed, as in a congenial element, and became acquainted with John Diodati and Frederick Spanheim, two learned professors of divinity. From Geneva he passed through France; and came home, after an absence of a year and three months.

At his return he heard of the death of his friend Charles Diodati; a man, whom it is reasonable to suppose, of great merit, since he was thought, by Milton, worthy of a poem, entitled Epitaphium Damonis, written with the common, but childish, imitation of pastoral life.

He now hired a lodging at the house of one Russel, a tailor, in St. Bride's church-yard, and under-

took the education of John and Edward Philips, his sister's sons. Finding his rooms too little, he took a house and garden in Aldersgate street[1], which was not then so much out of the world as it is now; and chose his dwelling at the upper end of a passage, that he might avoid the noise of the street. Here he received more boys, to be boarded and instructed.

Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance, on the man who hastens home, because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and, when he reaches the scene of action, vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. This is the period of his life from which all his biographers seem inclined to shrink. They are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a schoolmaster; but, since it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another, that his motive was only zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue; and all tell what they do not know to be true, only to excuse an act which no wise man will consider as in itself disgraceful. His father was alive; his allowance

[1] This is inaccurately expressed: Philips, and Dr. Newton, after him, say a garden-house, i. e. a house situated in a garden, and of which there were, especially in the north suburbs of London, very many, if not few else. The term is technical, and frequently occurs in the Athen. and Fast. Oxon. The meaning thereof may be collected from the article, Thomas Farnaby, the famous schoolmaster, of whom the author says, that he taught in Goldsmith's rents, in Cripplegate parish, behind Redcross street, where were large gardens and handsome houses. Milton's house in Jewin street was also a garden-house, as were, indeed, most of his dwellings after his settlement in London. H.

was not ample; and he supplied its deficiencies by an honest and useful employment.

It is told, that in the art of education he performed wonders; and a formidable list is given of the authors, Greek and Latin, that were read in Aldersgate street, by youth between ten and fifteen or sixteen years of age. Those who tell or receive these stories should consider, that nobody can be taught faster than he can learn. The speed of the horseman must be limited by the power of the horse. Every man, that has ever undertaken to instruct others, can tell what slow advances he has been able to make, and how much patience it requires to recall vagrant inattention, to stimulate sluggish indifference, and to rectify absurd misapprehension.

The purpose of Milton, as it seems, was to teach something more solid than the common literature of schools, by reading those authors that treat of physical subjects; such as the georgick, and astronomical treatises of the ancients. This was a scheme of improvement which seems to have busied many literary projectors of that age. Cowley, who had more means than Milton of knowing what was wanting to the embellishments of life, formed the same plan of education in his imaginary college.

But the truth is, that the knowledge of external nature, and the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes, are not the great or the frequent business of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing, the first requisite is the religious

and moral knowledge of right and wrong; the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind, and with those examples which may be said to embody truth, and prove, by events, the reasonableness of opinions. Prudence and justice are virtues and excellencies of all times and of all places; we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary, and at leisure. Physiological learning is of such rare emergence, that one may know another half his life, without being able to estimate his skill in hydrostaticks or astronomy; but his moral and prudential character immediately appears.

Those authors, therefore, are to be read at schools that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians.

Let me not be censured for this digression, as pedantick or paradoxical; for, if I have Milton against me, I have Socrates on my side. It was his labour to turn philosophy from the study of nature to speculations upon life; but the innovators whom I oppose are turning off attention from life to nature. They seem to think, that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil:

*Ὅτι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακόν τ' ἀγαθόν τε τέτυκται.*

Of institutions we may judge by their effects. From this wonder-working academy, I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very eminent for knowledge: its only genuine product, I believe, is a small history of poetry, written in Latin by his nephew Philips, of which, perhaps, none of my readers has ever heard[j].

That in his school, as in every thing else which he undertook, he laboured with great diligence, there is no reason for doubting. One part of his method deserves general imitation. He was careful to instruct his scholars in religion. Every Sunday was spent upon theology; of which he dictated a short system, gathered from the writers that were then fashionable in the Dutch universities.

He set his pupils an example of hard study and spare diet; only now and then he allowed himself to pass a day of festivity and indulgence with some gay gentlemen of Gray's inn.

He now began to engage in the controversies of the times, and lent his breath to blow the flames of contention. In 1641, he published a treatise of Reformation, in two books, against the established church; being willing to help the puritans, who were, he says, "inferior to the prelates in learning."

[j] Johnson did not here allude to Philip's Theatrum Poetarum, as has been ignorantly supposed, but, as he himself informed Mr. Malone, to another work by the same author, entitled, Tractatulus de carmine dramatico poetarum veterum præsertim in choris tragicis et veteris comœdiæ. Cui subjungitur compendiosa enumeratio poetarum (saltem quorum fama maxime enituit) qui a tempore Dantis Aligerii usque ad hanc ætatem claruerunt, etc. J. B.

Hall, bishop of Norwich, had published an Humble Remonstrance, in defence of episcopacy; to which, in 1641, five ministers[k], of whose names the first letters made the celebrated word Smectymnuus, gave their answer. Of this answer a confutation was attempted by the learned Usher; and to the confutation Milton published a reply, entitled, of Prelatical Episcopacy, and whether it may be deduced from the Apostolical Times, by virtue of those testimonies which are alleged to that purpose in some late treatises, one whereof goes under the name of James, lord bishop of Armagh.

I have transcribed this title to show, by his contemptuous mention of Usher, that he had now adopted the puritanical savageness of manners. His next work was, the Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy, by Mr. John Milton, 1642. In this book he discovers, not with ostentatious exultation, but with calm confidence, his high opinion of his own powers; and promises to undertake something, he yet knows not what, that may be of use and honour to his country. "This," says he, "is not to be obtained but by devout prayer to that eternal spirit that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. To this must be added, industrious and select reading, steady observation, and insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs; till which

[k] Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen, William Spurstow. R.

in some measure be compast, I refuse not to sustain this expectation." From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the Paradise Lost.

He published, the same year, two more pamphlets, upon the same question. To one of his antagonists, who affirms that he was "vomited out of the university," he answers, in general terms: "The fellows of the college, wherein I spent some years, at my parting, after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified, many times, how much better it would content them that I should stay. As for the common approbation or dislike of that place, as now it is, that I should esteem or disesteem myself the more for that, too simple is the answerer, if he think to obtain with me. Of small practice were the physician who could not judge, by what she and her sister have of long time vomited, that the worser stuff she strongly keeps in her stomach, but the better she is ever kecking at, and is queasy: she vomits now out of sickness; but, before it will be well with her, she must vomit by strong physick. The university, in the time of her better health, and my younger judgment, I never greatly admired, but now much less."

This is surely the language of a man who thinks that he has been injured. He proceeds to describe the course of his conduct, and the train of his thoughts; and, because he has been suspected of incontinence, gives an account of his own purity: "That if I be justly charged," says he, "with

this crime, it may come upon me with tenfold shame."

The style of his piece is rough, and such, perhaps, was that of his antagonist. This roughness he justifies, by great examples, in a long digression. Sometimes he tries to be humorous: "Lest I should take him for some chaplain in hand, some squire of the body to his prelate, one who serves not at the altar only, but at the court-cupboard, he will bestow on us a pretty model of himself; and sets me out half a dozen ptisical mottoes, wherever he had them, hopping short in the measure of convulsion fits; in which labour the agony of his wit having escaped narrowly, instead of well-sized periods, he greets us with a quantity of thumb-ring poesies. And thus ends this section, or rather dissection, of himself." Such is the controversial merriment of Milton; his gloomy seriousness is yet more offensive. Such is his malignity, "that hell grows darker at his frown."

His father, after Reading was taken by Essex, came to reside in his house; and his school increased. At Whitsuntide, in his thirty-fifth year, he married Mary, the daughter of Mr. Powel, a justice of the peace in Oxfordshire. He brought her to town with him, and expected all the advantages of a conjugal life. The lady, however, seems not much to have delighted in the pleasures of spare diet and hard study; for, as Philips relates, "having for a month led a philosophick life, after having been used at home to a great house, and much company and

joviality, her friends, possibly by her own desire, made earnest suit to have her company the remaining part of the summer; which was granted, upon a promise of her return at Michaelmas."

Milton was too busy to much miss his wife: he pursued his studies; and now and then visited the lady Margaret Leigh, whom he has mentioned in one of his sonnets. At last Michaelmas arrived; but the lady had no inclination to return to the sullen gloom of her husband's habitation, and, therefore, very willingly forgot her promise. He sent her a letter, but had no answer: he sent more with the same success. It could be alleged that letters miscarry; he, therefore, despatched a messenger, being by this time too angry to go himself. His messenger was sent back with some contempt. The family of the lady were cavaliers.

In a man whose opinion of his own merit was like Milton's, less provocation than this might have raised violent resentment. Milton soon determined to repudiate her for disobedience; and, being one of those who could easily find arguments to justify inclination, published, in 1644, the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce; which was followed by the Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce; and the next year, his Tetrachordon, expositions upon the four chief places of scripture which treat of marriage.

This innovation was opposed, as might be expected, by the clergy, who, then holding their famous assembly at Westminster, procured that the

author should be called before the lords; but "that house," says Wood, "whether approving the doctrine, or not favouring his accusers, did soon dismiss him."

There seems not to have been much written against him, nor any thing by any writer of eminence[l]. The antagonist that appeared, is styled by him "a serving man turned solicitor." Howell, in his Letters, mentions the new doctrine with contempt[m]: and it was, I suppose, thought more worthy of derision than of confutation. He complains of this neglect in two sonnets, of which the first is contemptible, and the second not excellent.

From this time it is observed, that he became an enemy to the presbyterians, whom he had favoured before. He that changes his party by his humour, is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest: he loves himself rather than truth.

His wife and her relations now found that Milton was not an unresisting sufferer of injuries; and, perceiving that he had begun to put his doctrine in practice, by courting a young woman of great accomplishments, the daughter of one doctor Davis, who was, however, not ready to comply, they resolved to endeavour a reunion. He went sometimes to the house of one Blackborough, his relation, in the lane of St. Martin-le-grand, and at one of his usual visits was surprised to see his wife come from another

[l] It was animadverted upon, but without any mention of Milton's name, by bishop Hall, in his Cases of Conscience, Decade 4, Case 2. J. B.

[m] He terms the author of it a shallow-brained puppy; and thus refers to it in his index: "Of a noddy who wrote a book about wiving." J. B.

room, and implore forgiveness on her knees. He resisted her entreaties for awhile; "but partly," says Philips, "his own generous nature, more inclinable to reconciliation than to perseverance in anger or revenge, and partly the strong intercession of friends on both sides, soon brought him to an act of oblivion and a firm league of peace." It were injurious to omit, that Milton afterwards received her father and her brothers in his own house, when they were distressed, with other royalists.

He published, about the same time, his Areopagitica, a speech of Mr. John Milton, for the liberty of unlicensed printing. The danger of such unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the science of government, which human understanding seems, hitherto, unable to solve. If nothing may be published but what civil authority shall have previously approved, power must always be the standard of truth; if every dreamer of innovations may propagate his projects, there can be no settlement; if every murmurer at government may diffuse discontent, there can be no peace; and if every skeptick in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion. The remedy against these evils is to punish the authors; for it is yet allowed that every society may punish, though not prevent, the publication of opinions which that society shall think pernicious; but this punishment, though it may crush the author, promotes the book; and it seems not more reasonable to leave the right of printing unrestrained, because writers may be

afterwards censured, than it would be to sleep with doors unbolted, because by our laws we can hang a thief.

But whatever were his engagements, civil or domestick, poetry was never long out of his thoughts. About this time (1645) a collection of his Latin and English poems appeared, in which the Allegro and Penseroso, with some others, were first published.

He had taken a large house in Barbican, for the reception of scholars; but the numerous relations of his wife, to whom he generously granted refuge for awhile, occupied his rooms. In time, however, they went away; "and the house again," says Philips, "now looked like a house of the muses only, though the accession of scholars was not great. Possibly his having proceeded so far in the education of youth may have been the occasion of his adversaries calling him pedagogue and schoolmaster; whereas, it is well known he never set up for a publick school, to teach all the young fry of a parish; but only was willing to impart his learning and knowledge to his relations, and the sons of gentlemen who were his intimate friends, and that neither his writings, nor his way of teaching, ever savoured in the least of pedantry."

Thus laboriously does his nephew extenuate what cannot be denied, and what might be confessed without disgrace. Milton was not a man who could become mean by a mean employment. This, however, his warmest friends seem not to have found; they, therefore, shift and palliate. He did not sell literature to all

comers, at an open shop; he was a chamber milliner, and measured his commodities only to his friends.

Philips, evidently impatient of viewing him in this state of degradation, tells us that it was not long continued; and, to raise his character again, has a mind to invest him with military splendour: "He is much mistaken," he says, "if there was not, about this time, a design of making him an adjutant-general in sir William Waller's army. But the new modelling of the army proved an obstruction to the design." An event cannot be set at a much greater distance than by having been only "designed about some time," if a man "be not much mistaken." Milton shall be a pedagogue no longer; for, if Philips be not much mistaken, somebody at some time designed him for a soldier.

About the time that the army was new-modelled, (1635,) he removed to a smaller house in Holborn, which opened backward into Lincoln's inn fields. He is not known to have published any thing afterwards, till the king's death, when, finding his murderers condemned by the presbyterians, he wrote a treatise to justify it, and "to compose the minds of the people."

He made some Remarks on the Articles of Peace between Ormond and the Irish Rebels. While he contented himself to write, he, perhaps, did only what his conscience dictated; and if he did not very vigilantly watch the influence of his own passions, and the gradual prevalence of opinions, first willingly admitted, and then habitually indulged; if

objections, by being overlooked, were forgotten, and desire superinduced convictions; he yet shared only the common weakness of mankind, and might be no less sincere than his opponents. But, as faction seldom leaves a man honest, however it might find him, Milton is suspected of having interpolated the book called Icon Basilike, which the council of state, to whom he was now made Latin secretary, employed him to censure, by inserting a prayer taken from Sidney's Arcadia, and imputing it to the king; whom he charges, in his Iconoclastes, with the use of this prayer, as with a heavy crime, in the indecent language with which prosperity had emboldened the advocates for rebellion to insult all that is venerable or great: "Who would have imagined so little fear in him of the true all-seeing deity, as, immediately before his death, to pop into the hands of the grave bishop that attended him, as a special relique of his saintly exercises, a prayer, stolen word for word, from the mouth of a heathen woman, praying to a heathen god?"

The papers which the king gave to Dr. Juxon, on the scaffold, the regicides took away, so that they were, at least, the publishers of this prayer; and Dr. Birch, who had examined the question with great care, was inclined to think them the forgers. The use of it, by adaptation, was innocent; and they who could so noisily censure it, with a little extension of their malice, could contrive what they wanted to accuse[n].

[n] This charge, as far as regards Milton, is examined by Dr. Symons with more moderation than usually characterizes his high-sounding and wordy panegyrics. See Life of Milton. Ed.

King Charles the second, being now sheltered in Holland, employed Salmasius, professor of polite learning at Leyden, to write a defence of his father and of monarchy; and, to excite his industry, gave him, as was reported, a hundred Jacobuses. Salmasius was a man of skill in languages, knowledge of antiquity, and sagacity of emendatory criticism, almost exceeding all hope of human attainment; and having, by excessive praises, been confirmed in great confidence of himself, though he probably had not much considered the principals of society, or the rights of government, undertook the employment without distrust of his own qualifications; and, as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649, published Defensio Regis.

To this Milton was required to write a sufficient answer; which he performed (1651) in such a manner, that Hobbes declared himself unable to decide whose language was best, or whose arguments were worst. In my opinion, Milton's periods are smoother, neater, and more pointed; but he delights himself with teasing his adversary, as much as with confuting him. He makes a foolish allusion of Salmasius, whose doctrine he considers as servile and unmanly, to the stream of Salmacis, which, whoever entered, left half his virility behind him. Salmasius was a Frenchman, and was unhappily married to a scold: "Tu es Gallus," says Milton, "et, ut aiunt, nimium gallinaceus." But his supreme pleasure is to tax his adversary, so renowned for criticism, with vitious Latin. He opens his book with telling that he has

used *persona*, which, according to Milton, signifies only a *mask*, in a sense not known to the Romans, by applying it as we apply *person*. But, as Nemesis is always on the watch, it is memorable that he has enforced the charge of a solecism by an expression in itself grossly solecistical, when, for one of those supposed blunders, he says, as Ker, and, I think, some one before him, has remarked, "propino te grammatistis tuis *vapulandum*°." From *vapulo*, which has a passive sense, *vapulandus* can never be derived. No man forgets his original trade: the rights of nations, and of kings, sink into questions of grammar, if grammarians discuss them.

Milton, when he undertook this answer, was weak of body and dim of sight; but his will was forward, and what was wanting of health was supplied by zeal. He was rewarded with a thousand pounds, and his book was much read; for paradox, recommended by spirit and elegance, easily gains attention; and he, who told every man that he was equal to his king, could hardly want an audience.

That the performance of Salmasius was not dispersed with equal rapidity, or read with equal eagerness, is very credible. He taught only the stale doctrine of authority, and the unpleasing duty of submission; and he had been so long not only the monarch, but the tyrant, of literature, that almost all mankind were delighted to find him defied and

° The work here referred to is Selectarum de Lingua Latina Observationum Libri duo. Ductu et cura Joannis Ker, 1719. Ker observes, that vapulandum is pinguis solæcismus. J. B.

insulted by a new name, not yet considered as any one's rival. If Christina, as is said, commended the Defence of the People, her purpose must be to torment Salmasius, who was then at court; for neither her civil station, nor her natural character, could dispose her to favour the doctrine, who was by birth a queen, and by temper despotick.

That Salmasius was, from the appearance of Milton's book, treated with neglect, there is not much proof; but to a man, so long accustomed to admiration, a little praise of his antagonist would be sufficiently offensive, and might incline him to leave Sweden, from which, however, he was dismissed, not with any mark of contempt, but with a train of attendance scarcely less than regal.

He prepared a reply, which, left as it was imperfect, was published by his son in the year of the restoration. In the beginning, being probably most in pain for his Latinity, he endeavours to defend his use of the word *persona;* but, if I remember right, he misses a better authority than any that he has found, that of Juvenal in his fourth satire:

> Quid agas, cum dira et fœdior omni
> Crimine *persona* est?

As Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself with the belief that he had shortened Salmasius's life, and both, perhaps, with more malignity than reason. Salmasius died at the spa, Sept. 3, 1653; and, as controvertists are commonly said to be killed by

their last dispute, Milton was flattered with the credit of destroying him.

Cromwell had now dismissed the parliament by the authority of which he had destroyed monarchy, and commenced monarch himself, under the title of protector, but with kingly, and more than kingly, power. That his authority was lawful, never was pretended: he himself founded his right only in necessity; but Milton, having now tasted the honey of publick employment, would not return to hunger and phylosophy, but, continuing to exercise his office, under a manifest usurpation, betrayed to his power that liberty which he had defended. Nothing can be more just than that rebellion should end in slavery; that he, who had justified the murder of his king, for some acts which seemed to him unlawful, should now sell his services, and his flatteries, to a tyrant, of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful.

He had now been blind for some years; but his vigour of intellect was such, that he was not disabled to discharge his office of Latin secretary, or continue his controversies. His mind was too eager to be diverted, and too strong to be subdued.

About this time his first wife died in childbed, having left him three daughters. As he probably did not much love her, he did not long continue the appearance of lamenting her; but, after a short time, married Catherine, the daughter of one captain Woodcock, of Hackney; a woman, doubtless, educated in opinions like his own. She died, within a

year, of childbirth, or some distemper that followed it; and her husband honoured her memory with a poor sonnet.

The first reply to Milton's Defensio Populi was published in 1651, called Apologia pro Rege et Populo Anglicano, contra Johannis Polypragmatici, alias Miltoni, Defensionem destructivam Regis et Populi. Of this the author was not known; but Milton and his nephew, Philips, under whose name he published an answer, so much corrected by him that it might be called his own, imputed it to Bramhal; and, knowing him no friend to regicides, thought themselves at liberty to treat him as if they had known what they only suspected.

Next year appeared Regii Sanguinis Clamor ad Cœlum. Of this the author was Peter du Moulin, who was afterwards prebendary of Canterbury; but Morus, or More, a French minister, having the care of its publication, was treated as the writer by Milton in his Defensio Secunda, and overwhelmed by such violence of invective, that he began to shrink under the tempest, and gave his persecutors the means of knowing the true author. Du Moulin was now in great danger; but Milton's pride operated against his malignity; and both he and his friends were more willing that Du Moulin should escape than that he should be convicted of mistake.

In this second defence he shows that his eloquence is not merely satirical; the rudeness of his invective is equalled by the grossness of his flattery. "Deserimur, Cromuelle, tu solus superes, ad te

summa nostrarum rerum rediit, in te solo consistit, insuperabili tuæ virtuti cedimus cuncti, nemine vel obloquente, nisi qui æquales inæqualis ipse honores sibi quærit, aut digniori concessos invidet, aut non intelligit nihil esse in societate hominum magis vel Deo gratum, vel rationi consentaneum, esse in civitate nihil æquius, nihil utilius, quam potiri rerum dignissimum. Eum te agnoscunt omnes, Cromuelle, ea tu civis maximus et gloriosissimus[p], dux publici consilii, exercituum fortissimorum imperator, pater patriæ gessisti. Sic tu spontanea bonorum omnium, et animitus missa voce salutaris."

Cæsar, when he assumed the perpetual dictatorship, had not more servile or more elegant flattery. A translation may show its servility; but its elegance is less attainable. Having exposed the unskilfulness or selfishness of the former government, "We were left," says Milton, "to ourselves: the whole national interest fell into your hands, and subsists only in your abilities. To your virtue, overpowering and resistless, every man gives way, except some who, without equal qualifications, aspire to equal honours, who envy the distinctions of merit, greater than their own, or who have yet to learn, that, in the coalition of human society, nothing is more pleasing to God, or more agreeable to reason, than that the highest mind should have the sovereign power. Such, sir, are you by general confession; such

[p] It may be doubted whether *gloriosissimus* be here used with Milton's boasted purity. *Res gloriosa* is an *illustrious thing;* but *vir gloriosus* is *commonly* a *braggart*, as in *miles gloriosus*. Dr. J.

are the things achieved by you, the greatest and most glorious of our countrymen, the director of our publick councils, the leader of unconquered armies, the father of your country; for by that title does every good man hail you with sincere and voluntary praise."

Next year, having defended all that wanted defence, he found leisure to defend himself. He undertook his own vindication against More, whom he declares, in his title, to be justly called the author of the Regii Sanguinis Clamor. In this there is no want of vehemence or eloquence, nor does he forget his wonted wit: "Morus est? an Momus? an uterque idem est?" He then remembers that Morus is Latin for a mulberry-tree, and hints at the known transformation:

"Poma alba ferebat
Quæ post nigra tulit Morus."

With this piece ended his controversies; and he, from this time, gave himself up to his private studies and his civil employment.

As secretary to the protector, he is supposed to have written the declaration of the reasons for a war with Spain. His agency was considered as of great importance; for, when a treaty with Sweden was artfully suspended, the delay was publickly imputed to Mr. Milton's indisposition; and the Swedish agent was provoked to express his wonder, that only one man in England could write Latin, and that man blind.

Being now forty-seven years old, and seeing him-

self disencumbered from external interruptions, he seems to have recollected his former purposes, and to have resumed three great works, which he had planned for his future employment; an epick poem, the history of his country, and a dictionary of the Latin tongue.

To collect a dictionary, seems a work of all others least practicable in a state of blindness, because it depends upon perpetual and minute inspection and collation. Nor would Milton probably have begun it, after he had lost his eyes; but, having had it always before him, he continued it, says Philips, "almost to his dying-day; but the papers were so discomposed and deficient, that they could not be fitted for the press." The compilers of the Latin dictionary, printed at Cambridge, had the use of those collections in three folios; but what was their fate afterwards is not known[q].

To compile a history from various authors, when they can only be consulted by other eyes, is not easy, nor possible, but with more skilful and attentive help than can be commonly obtained; and it was

[q] The Cambridge dictionary, published in 4to. 1693, is no other than a copy, with some small additions, of that of Dr. Adam Littleton in 1686, by sundry persons, of whom though their names are concealed, there is great reason to conjecture that Milton's nephew, Edward Philips, is one: for it is expressly said by Wood, Fasti, vol. i. p. 266, that Milton's Thesaurus came to his hands; and it is asserted in the preface thereto, that the editors thereof had the use of three large folios in manuscript, collected and digested into alphabetical order by Mr. John Milton.

It has been remarked, that the additions, together with the preface above mentioned, and a large part of the title of the Cambridge dictionary, have been incorporated and printed with the subsequent editions of Littleton's dictionary, till that of 1735. Vid. Biogr. Brit. 2985, in note. So that, for aught that appears to the contrary, Philips was the last possessor of Milton's manuscripts. H.

probably the difficulty of consulting and comparing that stopped Milton's narrative at the conquest; a period at which affairs were not yet very intricate, nor author's very numerous.

For the subject of his epick poem, after much deliberation, long choosing, and beginning late, he fixed upon Paradise Lost; a design so comprehensive, that it could be justified only by success. He had once designed to celebrate king Arthur, as he hints in his verses to Mansus; but "Arthur was reserved," says Fenton, "to another destiny[r]."

It appears, by some sketches of poetical projects left in manuscript, and to be seen in a library[s] at Cambridge, that he had digested his thoughts on this subject into one of those wild dramas which were anciently called Mysteries[t]; and Philips had seen what he terms part of a tragedy, beginning with the first ten lines of Satan's address to the sun. These mysteries consist of allegorical persons; such as Justice, Mercy, Faith. Of the tragedy or mystery of Paradise Lost, there are two plans:

| The Persons | The Persons |
|---|---|
| Michael. | Moses. |
| Chorus of Angels. | Divine Justice, Wisdom, |
| Heavenly Love. | Heavenly Love. |
| Lucifer. | The Evening Star, Hesperus. |

[r] *Id est*, to be the subject of an heroick poem, written by sir Richard Blackmore. H.

[s] Trinity college. R.

[t] The dramas in which Justice, Mercy, Faith, &c. were introduced, were moralities, not mysteries. MALONE.

| The Persons | The Persons |
| --- | --- |
| Adam, with the Serpent. | Chorus of Angels. |
| Eve, with the Serpent. | Lucifer. |
| Conscience. | Adam. |
| Death. | |
| Labour, Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, with others; Mutes. | Eve. |
| | Conscience. |
| | Labour, Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, Fear, Death, Mutes. |
| Faith. | Faith. |
| Hope. | Hope. |
| Charity. | Charity. |

## Paradise Lost

### The Persons

Moses προλογίζει, recounting how he assumed his true body; that it corrupts not, because it is with God in the mount: declares the like of Enoch and Elijah; besides the purity of the place, that certain pure winds, dews, and clouds, preserve it from corruption; whence exhorts to the sight of God; tells they cannot see Adam in the state of innocence, by reason of their sin.

Justice, Mercy, Wisdom, debating what should become of man, if he fall.

Chorus of angels singing a hymn of the creation.

ACT II

Heavenly Love.
Evening Star.
Chorus sings the marriage song, and describes Paradise.

ACT III

Lucifer contriving Adam's ruin.
Chorus fears for Adam, and relates Lucifer's rebellion and fall.

ACT IV

Adam, Eve, } fallen.
Conscience cites them to God's examination.
Chorus bewails, and tells the good Adam has lost.

ACT V

Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise.
——————presented by an angel with
Labour, Grief, Hatred, Envy, War, Famine, Pestilence, Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, Fear, Death, } Mutes.
To whom he gives their names. Likewise Winter, Heat, Tempest, &c.
Faith, Hope, Charity, } comfort him, and instruct him.
Chorus briefly concludes.

Such was his first design, which could have produced only an allegory, or mystery. The following sketch seems to have attained more maturity.

Adam unparadised:

The angel Gabriel, either descending or entering; showing, since this globe was created, his frequency as much on earth as in heaven; describes Paradise. Next, the chorus, showing the reason of his coming to keep his watch in Paradise, after Lucifer's rebellion, by command from God; and withal expressing his desire to see and know more concerning this excellent new creature, man. The angel Gabriel, as by his name signifying a prince of power, tracing Paradise with a more free office, passes by the station of the chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of man; as the creation of Eve, with their love and marriage. After this, Lucifer appears; after his overthrow, bemoans himself, seeks revenge on man. The chorus prepares resistance at his first approach. At last, after discourse of enmity on either side, he departs: whereat the chorus sings of the battle and victory in heaven, against him and his accomplices: as before, after the first act, was sung a hymn of the creation. Here again may appear Lucifer, relating and exulting in what he had done to the destruction of man. Man next, and Eve, having by this time been seduced by the serpent, appears confusedly covered with leaves. Conscience, in a shape, accuses him; justice cites him to the place whither Jehovah called for him. In the mean while, the chorus entertains the stage, and is informed by some angel the manner of the fall. Here the chorus bewails Adam's fall; Adam then and Eve return; accuse one another; but especially Adam

lays the blame to his wife; is stubborn in his offence. Justice appears, reasons with him, convinces him. The chorus admonisheth Adam, and bids him beware Lucifer's example of impenitence. The angel is sent to banish them out of Paradise; but before, causes to pass before his eyes, in shapes, a mask of all the evils of this life and world. He is humbled, relents, despairs; at last appears Mercy, comforts him, promises the Messiah; then calls in Faith, Hope, and Charity; instructs him; he repents, gives God the glory, submits to his penalty. The chorus briefly concludes. Compare this with the former draught.

These are very imperfect rudiments of Paradise Lost; but it is pleasant to see great works in their seminal state, pregnant with latent possibilities of excellence; nor could there be any more delightful entertainment than to trace their gradual growth and expansion, and to observe how they are sometimes suddenly advanced by accidental hints, and sometimes slowly improved by steady meditation.

Invention is almost the only literary labour which blindness cannot obstruct, and, therefore, he naturally solaced his solitude by the indulgence of his fancy, and the melody of his numbers. He had done what he knew to be necessary previous to poetical excellence; he had made himself acquainted with "seemly arts and affairs;" his comprehension was extended by various knowledge, and his memory stored with intellectual treasures. He was skilful in many languages, and had, by reading and composi-

tion, attained the full mastery of his own. He would have wanted little help from books, had he retained the power of perusing them.

But while his greater designs were advancing, having now, like many other authors, caught the love of publication, he amused himself, as he could, with little productions. He sent to the press, 1658, a manuscript of Raleigh, called, the Cabinet Council; and next year gratified his malevolence to the clergy, by a Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases, and the Means of removing Hirelings out of the Church.

Oliver was now dead; Richard was constrained to resign: the system of extemporary government, which had been held together only by force, naturally fell into fragments, when that force was taken away; and Milton saw himself and his cause in equal danger. But he had still hope of doing something. He wrote letters, which Toland has published, to such men as he thought friends to the new commonwealth; and, even in the year of the restoration, he "bated no jot of heart or hope," but was fantastical enough to think that the nation, agitated as it was, might be settled by a pamphlet, called, a ready and easy Way to establish a free Commonwealth: which was, however, enough considered to be both seriously and ludicrously answered.

The obstinate enthusiasm of the commonwealthmen was very remarkable. When the king was apparently returning, Harrington, with a few associates as fanatical as himself, used to meet, with all the

gravity of political importance, to settle an equal government by rotation; and Milton, kicking when he could strike no longer, was foolish enough to publish, a few weeks before the restoration, notes upon a sermon preached by one Griffiths, entitled, the Fear of God and the King. To these notes an answer was written by L'Estrange, in a pamphlet, petulantly called, No Blind Guides.

But whatever Milton could write, or men of greater activity could do, the king was now about to be restored with the irresistible approbation of the people. He was, therefore, no longer secretary, and was, consequently, obliged to quit the house which he held by his office; and, proportioning his sense of danger to his opinion of the importance of his writings, thought it convenient to seek some shelter, and hid himself, for a time, in Bartholomew close, by West Smithfield.

I cannot but remark a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers: every house in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence.

The king, with lenity of which the world has had, perhaps, no other example, declined to be the judge or avenger of his own or his father's wrongs; and promised to admit into the act of oblivion all, except those whom the parliament should except; and the parliament doomed none to capital punishment, but the wretches who had immediately cooperated in the murder of the king. Milton was certainly not

one of them; he had only justified what they had done.

This justification was, indeed, sufficiently offensive; and, June 16, an order was issued to seize Milton's Defence, and Goodwin's Obstructors of Justice, another book of the same tendency, and burn them by the common hangman. The attorney-general was ordered to prosecute the authors; but Milton was not seized, nor, perhaps, very diligently pursued.

Not long after, August 19, the flutter of innumerable bosoms was stilled by an act, which the king, that his mercy might want no recommendation of elegance, rather called an act of oblivion, than of grace. Goodwin was named, with nineteen more, as incapacitated for any publick trust; but of Milton there was no exception[u].

Of this tenderness shown to Milton, the curiosity of mankind has not forborne to inquire the reason. Burnet thinks he was forgotten; but this is another instance which may confirm Dalrymple's observation, who says, "that whenever Burnet's narrations are examined, he appears to be mistaken."

Forgotten he was not; for his prosecution was ordered; it must be, therefore, by design that he

[u] Philips says expressly, that Milton was excepted and disqualified from bearing any office; but Toland says he was not excepted at all, and consequently included in the general pardon, or act of indemnity, passed the 29th of August, 1660. Toland is right, for I find Goodwin and Ph. Nye, the minister, excepted in the act, but Milton not named. However, he obtained a special pardon in December, 1660, which passed the privy seal, but not the great seal. MALONE.

was included in the general oblivion. He is said to have had friends in the house, such as Marvel, Morrice, and sir Thomas Clarges: and, undoubtedly, a man like him must have had influence. A very particular story of his escape is told by Richardson[v] in his Memoirs, which he received from Pope, as delivered by Betterton, who might have heard it from Davenant. In the war between the king and parliament, Davenant was made prisoner and condemned to die; but was spared at the request of Milton. When the turn of success brought Milton into the like danger, Davenant repayed the benefit by appearing in his favour. Here is a reciprocation of generosity and gratitude so pleasing, that the tale makes its own way to credit. But, if help were wanted, I know not where to find it. The danger of Davenant is certain, from his own relation; but of his escape there is no account[w]. Betterton's narration can be traced no higher; it is not known that he had it from Davenant. We are told that the benefit exchanged was life for life; but it seems not certain that Milton's life ever was in danger. Goodwin, who had committed the same kind of crime, escaped with incapacitation; and, as exclusion from publick trust is a punishment which the power of government can commonly inflict, without the help of a particular law, it required no great interest to exempt

[v] It was told before by A. Wood in Ath. Oxon. vol. ii. p. 412. second edition.

[w] That Milton saved Davenant, is attested by Aubrey, and by Wood, from him; but none of them say that Davenant saved Milton: this is Richardson's assertion merely. MALONE.

Milton from a censure little more than verbal. Something may be reasonably ascribed to veneration and compassion; to veneration of his abilities, and compassion for his distresses, which made it fit to forgive his malice for his learning. He was now poor and blind; and who would pursue with violence an illustrious enemy, depressed by fortune, and disarmed by nature[x]?

The publication of the act of oblivion put him in the same condition with his fellow subjects. He was, however, upon some pretence, not now known, in the custody of the serjeant, in December; and when he was released, upon his refusal of the fees demanded, he and the serjeant were called before the house. He was now safe within the shade of oblivion, and knew himself to be as much out of the power of a griping officer, as any other man. How the question was determined is not known. Milton would hardly have contended, but that he knew himself to have right on his side.

He then removed to Jewin street, near Aldersgate street; and being blind, and by no means wealthy, wanted a domestick companion and attendant; and, therefore, by the recommendation of Dr. Paget, married Elizabeth Minshul, of a gentleman's

[x] A different account of the means by which Milton secured himself, is given by an historian lately brought to light: "Milton, Latin secretary to Cromwell, distinguished by his writings in favour of the rights and liberties of the people, pretended to be dead, and had a publick funeral procession. The king applauded his policy in escaping the punishment of death, by a seasonable show of dying." Cunningham's History of Great Britain, vol. i. p. 14. R.

family in Cheshire, probably without a fortune. All his wives were virgins; for he has declared that he thought it gross and indelicate to be a second husband: upon what other principles his choice was made cannot now be known; but marriage afforded not much of his happiness. The first wife left him in disgust, and was brought back only by terrour; the second, indeed, seems to have been more a favourite, but her life was short. The third, as Philips relates, oppressed his children in his lifetime, and cheated them at his death.

Soon after his marriage, according to an obscure story, he was offered the continuance of his employment, and, being pressed by his wife to accept it, answered: "You, like other women, want to ride in your coach; my wish is to live and die an honest man." If he considered the Latin secretary as exercising any of the powers of government, he that had shared authority, either with the parliament or Cromwell, might have forborne to talk very loudly of his honesty; and, if he thought the office purely ministerial, he certainly might have honestly retained it under the king. But this tale has too little evidence to deserve a disquisition; large offers and sturdy rejections are among the most common topicks of falsehood.

He had so much either of prudence or gratitude, that he forbore to disturb the new settlement with any of his political or ecclesiastical opinions, and, from this time, devoted himself to poetry and literature. Of his zeal for learning, in all its parts, he gave

a proof by publishing, the next year, 1661, Accidence commenced Grammar; a little book, which has nothing remarkable, but that its author, who had been lately defending the supreme powers of his country, and was then writing Paradise Lost, could descend from his elevation to rescue children from the perplexity of grammatical confusion, and the trouble of lessons unnecessarily repeated[y].

About this time Elwood, the quaker, being recommended to him, as one who would read Latin to him for the advantage of his conversation, attended him every afternoon, except on Sundays. Milton, who, in his letter to Hartlib, had declared, that "to read Latin with an English mouth is as ill a hearing as law French," required that Elwood should learn and practise the Italian pronunciation, which, he said, was necessary, if he would talk with foreigners. This seems to have been a task troublesome without use. There is little reason for preferring the Italian pronunciation to our own, except that it is more general; and to teach it to an Englishman is only to make him a foreigner at home. He who travels, if he speaks Latin, may so soon learn the sounds which every native gives it, that he need make no provision before his journey; and if strangers visit us, it is their business to practise such conformity to our modes as they expect from us in

[y]Gildon, in his continuation of Langbaine's account of the dramatick poets, 8vo. 1693, says, that he had been told that Milton, after the restoration, kept a school at or near Greenwich. The publication of an Accidence at that period gives some countenance to this tradition. Malone.

their own countries. Elwood complied with the directions, and improved himself by his attendance; for he relates, that Milton, having a curious ear, knew, by his voice, when he read what he did not understand, and would stop him, and "open the most difficult passages."

In a short time he took a house in the Artillery walk, leading to Bunhill fields; the mention of which concludes the register of Milton's removals and habitations. He lived longer in this place than in any other.

He was now busied by Paradise Lost. Whence he drew the original design has been variously conjectured, by men who cannot bear to think themselves ignorant of that which, at last, neither diligence nor sagacity can discover. Some find the hint in an Italian tragedy. Voltaire tells a wild and unauthorized story of a farce seen by Milton, in Italy, which opened thus: "Let the rainbow be the fiddlestick of the fiddle of heaven[z]. "It has been already shown, that the first conception was of a tragedy or mystery, not of a narrative, but a dramatick work, which he is supposed to have begun to reduce to its present form about the time (1655) when he finished his dispute with the defenders of the king.

He, long before, had promised to adorn his native country by some great performance, while he had

[z] It is scarcely necessary to inform the reader, that this relation of Voltaire's was perfectly true, as far as relates to the existence of the play which he speaks of, namely, the Adamo of Andreini; but it is still a question whether Milton ever saw it. J. B.

yet, perhaps, no settled design, and was stimulated only by such expectations as naturally arose from the survey of his attainments, and the consciousness of his powers. What he should undertake, it was difficult to determine. He was "long choosing, and began late."

While he was obliged to divide his time between his private studies and affairs of state, his poetical labour must have been often interrupted; and, perhaps, he did little more in that busy time than construct the narrative, adjust the episodes, proportion the parts, accumulate images and sentiments, and treasure in his memory, or preserve in writing, such hints as books or meditation would supply. Nothing particular is known of his intellectual operations while he was a statesman; for, having every help and accommodation at hand, he had no need of uncommon expedients.

Being driven from all publick stations, he is yet too great not to be traced by curiosity to his retirement; where he has been found, by Mr. Richardson, the fondest of his admirers, sitting "before his door in a grey coat of coarse cloth, in warm sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air; and so, as well as in his own room, receiving the visits of the people of distinguished parts, as well as quality." His visiters of high quality must now be imagined to be few; but men of parts might reasonably court the conversation of a man so generally illustrious, that foreigners are reported, by Wood, to have visited the house in Bread street, where he was born.

According to another account, he was seen in a small house, "neatly enough dressed in black clothes, sitting in a room hung with rusty green; pale but not cadaverous, with chalkstones in his hand. He said, that, if it were not for the gout, his blindness would be tolerable."

In the intervals of his pain, being made unable to use the common exercises, he used to swing in a chair, and sometimes played upon an organ.

He was now confessedly and visibly employed upon his poem, of which the progress might be noted by those with whom he was familiar; for he was obliged, when he had composed as many lines as his memory would conveniently retain, to employ some friend in writing them, having, at least for part of the time, no regular attendant. This gave opportunity to observations and reports.

Mr. Philips observes, that there was a very remarkable circumstance in the composure of Paradise Lost, "which I have a particular reason," says he, "to remember; for whereas I had the perusal of it from the very beginning, for some years, as I went from time to time to visit him, in parcels of ten, twenty, or thirty verses at a time, which, being written by whatever hand came next, might possibly want correction, as to the orthography and pointing; having, as the summer came on, not been showed any for a considerable while, and desiring the reason thereof, was answered, that his vein never happily flowed but from the autumnal equinox to the vernal; and that whatever he attempted at other times was

never to his satisfaction, though he courted his fancy never so much; so that, in all the years he was about this poem, he may be said to have spent half his time therein."

Upon this relation Toland remarks, that in his opinion, Philips has mistaken the time of the year; for Milton, in his elegies, declares, that with the advance of the spring he feels the increase of his poetical force, "redeunt in carmina vires." To this it is answered, that Philips could hardly mistake time so well marked; and it may be added, that Milton might find different times of the year favourable to different parts of life. Mr. Richardson conceives it impossible that "such a work should be suspended for six months, or for one. It may go on faster or slower, but it must go on." By what necessity it must continually go on, or why it might not be laid aside and resumed, it is not easy to discover.

This dependance of the soul upon the seasons, those temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided, as the fumes of vain imagination: "Sapiens dominabitur astris." The author that thinks himself weather-bound will find, with a little help from hellebore, that he is only idle or exhausted. But while this notion has possession of the head, it produces the inability which it supposes. Our powers owe much of their energy to our hopes: "possunt quia posse videntur." When success seems attainable, diligence is enforced; but when it is admitted that the faculties are suppressed by a cross wind, or a cloudy sky, the

day is given up without resistance; for who can contend with the course of nature?

From such prepossessions Milton seems not to have been free. There prevailed, in his time, an opinion, that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of nature. It was suspected, that the whole creation languished, that neither trees nor animals had the height or bulk of their predecessors, and that every thing was daily sinking by gradual diminution[a]. Milton appears to suspect that souls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without some fear that his book is to be written in "an age too late" for heroick poesy[b].

Another opinion wanders about the world, and sometimes finds reception among wise men; an opinion that restrains the operations of the mind to particular regions, and supposes that a luckless mortal may be born in a degree of latitude too high or too low for wisdom or for wit. From this fancy, wild as it is, he had not wholly cleared his head, when he feared lest the climate of his country might be too cold for flights of imagination.

[a] This opinion is, with great learning and ingenuity, refuted in a book now very little known, an Apology or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World, by Dr. George Hakewill, London, folio, 1635. The first who ventured to propagate it in this country was Dr. Gabriel Goodman, bishop of Gloucester, a man of a versatile temper, and the author of a book entitled, the Fall of Man, or the Corruption of Nature proved by Natural Reason. Lond. 1616, and 1624. quarto. He was plundered in the usurpation, turned Roman catholick, and died in obscurity. See Athen. Oxon. vol. i. p. 727. H.

[b] ——— Unless *an age too late*, or cold
Climate, or years damp my intended wing.
Par. Lost. b. ix. l. 44.

Into a mind already occupied by such fancies, another not more reasonable might easily find its way. He that could fear lest his genius had fallen upon too old a world, or too chill a climate, might consistently magnify to himself the influence of the seasons, and believe his faculties to be vigorous only half the year.

His submission to the seasons was, at least, more reasonable than his dread of decaying nature, or a frigid zone; for general causes must operate uniformly in a general abatement of mental power; if less could be performed by the writer, less, likewise, would content the judges of his work. Among this lagging race of frosty grovellers he might still have risen into eminence, by producing something, which "they should not willingly let die." However inferiour to the heroes who were born in better ages, he might still be great among his contemporaries, with the hope of growing every day greater in the dwindle of posterity. He might still be a giant among the pygmies, the one-eyed monarch of the blind[c].

Of his artifices of study, or particular hours of composition, we have little account, and there was, perhaps, little to be told. Richardson, who seems to

[c] Johnson has, in many places of his Rambler and Idler, ridiculed the notion of a dependance of our mental powers on the variations of atmosphere. In Boswell's life, however, there are some recorded instances of his own subjection to this common infirmity. We cannot refrain from denouncing, as unfeeling and ungenerous, Johnson's sarcasms at Milton's distempered imagination, when old age, disease, and darkness had come upon him. Dr. Symons runs into the diametrically opposite extreme. Ed.

have been very diligent in his inquiries, but discovers always a wish to find Milton discriminated from other men, relates, that "he would sometimes lie awake whole nights, but not a verse could he make; and on a sudden his poetical faculty would rush upon him with an impetus or œstrum, and his daughter was immediately called to secure what came. At other times he would dictate, perhaps, forty lines in a breath, and then reduce them to half the number."

These bursts of light, and involutions of darkness, these transient and involuntary excursions and retrocessions of invention, having some appearance of deviation from the common train of nature, are eagerly caught by the lovers of a wonder. Yet something of this inequality happens to every man in every mode of exertion, manual or mental. The mechanick cannot handle his hammer and his file at all times with equal dexterity; there are hours, he knows not why, when "his hand is out." By Mr. Richardson's relation, casually conveyed, much regard cannot be claimed. That, in his intellectual hour, Milton called for his daughter to "secure what came," may be questioned; for unluckily it happens to be known, that his daughters were never taught to write; nor would he have been obliged, as is universally confessed, to have employed any casual visitor in disburdening his memory, if his daughter could have performed the office.

The story of reducing his exuberance has been told of other authors, and, though, doubtless, true of

every fertile and copious mind, seems to have been gratuitously transferred to Milton.

What he has told us, and we cannot now know more, is, that he composed much of this poem in the night and morning, I suppose, before his mind was disturbed with common business; and that he poured out, with great fluency, his "unpremeditated verse." Versification, free, like his, from the distresses of rhyme, must, by a work so long, be made prompt and habitual; and, when his thoughts were once adjusted, the words would come at his command.

At what particular times of his life the parts of his work were written, cannot often be known. The beginning of the third book shows that he had lost his sight; and the introduction to the seventh, that the return of the king had clouded him with discountenance: and that he was offended by the licentious festivity of the restoration. There are no other internal notes of time. Milton, being now cleared from all effects of his disloyalty, had nothing required from him but the common duty of living in quiet, to be rewarded with the common right of protection; but this, which, when he skulked from the approach of his king, was, perhaps, more than he hoped, seems not to have satisfied him; for, no sooner is he safe, than he finds himself in danger: "fallen on evil days and evil tongues, and with darkness and with danger compass'd round." This darkness, had his eyes been better employed, had undoubtedly deserved compassion; but to add the

mention of danger was ungrateful and unjust. He was fallen, indeed, on "evil days;" the time was come in which regicides could no longer boast their wickedness. But of "evil tongues" for Milton to complain, required impudence, at least, equal to his other powers; Milton, whose warmest advocates must allow, that he never spared any asperity of reproach, or brutality of insolence.

But the charge itself seems to be false; for it would be hard to recollect any reproach cast upon him, either serious or ludicrous, through the whole remaining part of his life. He pursued his studies, or his amusements, without persecution, molestation, or insult. Such is the reverence paid to great abilities, however misused: they who contemplated in Milton the scholar and the wit, were contented to forget the reviler of his king.

When the plague, 1665, raged in London, Milton took refuge at Chalfont, in Bucks; where Elwood, who had taken the house for him, first saw a complete copy of Paradise Lost, and, having perused it, said to him: "Thou hast said a great deal upon Paradise Lost; what hast thou to say upon Paradise Found?"

Next year, when the danger of infection had ceased, he returned to Bunhill fields, and designed the publication of his poem. A license was necessary, and he could expect no great kindness from a chaplain of the archbishop of Canterbury. He seems, however, to have been treated with tenderness; for though objections were made to particular passages, and among them to the simile of the sun, eclipsed

in the first book, yet the license was granted; and he sold his copy, April 27, 1667, to Samuel Simmons, for an immediate payment of five pounds, with a stipulation to receive five pounds more, when thirteen hundred should be sold of the first edition; and again, five pounds after the sale of the same number of the second edition; and another five pounds after the same sale of the third. None of the three editions were to be extended beyond fifteen hundred copies.

The first edition was of ten books, in a small quarto. The titles were varied from year to year; and an advertisement and the arguments of the books were omitted in some copies, and inserted in others.

The sale gave him, in two years, a right to his second payment, for which the receipt was signed April 26, 1669. The second edition was not given till 1674; it was printed in small octavo; and the number of books was increased to twelve, by a division of the seventh and twelfth; and some other small improvements were made. The third edition was published in 1678; and the widow, to whom the copy was then to devolve, sold all her claims to Simmons for eight pounds, according to her receipt given December 21, 1680. Simmons had already agreed to transfer the whole right to Brabazon Aylmer, for twenty-five pounds; and Aylmer sold to Jacob Tonson half, August 17, 1683, and half, March 24, 1690, at a price considerably enlarged. In the history of Paradise Lost, a deduction thus minute will rather gratify than fatigue.



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The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and of the uncertainty of literary fame; and inquiries have been made, and conjectures offered, about the causes of its long obscurity and late reception. But has the case been truly stated? Have not lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt?

That in the reigns of Charles and James the Paradise Lost received no publick acclamations, is readily confessed. Wit and literature were on the side of the court; and who, that solicited favour or fashion would venture to praise the defender of the regicides? All that he himself could think his due, from "evil tongues" in "evil days," was that reverential silence which was generously preserved. But it cannot be inferred, that his poem was not read, or not, however unwillingly, admired.

The sale, if it be considered, will justify the publick. Those who have no power to judge of past times, but by their own, should always doubt their conclusions. The call for books was not in Milton's age what it is in the present. To read was not then a general amusement; neither traders, nor often gentlemen, thought themselves disgraced by ignorance. The women had not then aspired to literature, nor was every house supplied with a closet of knowledge. Those, indeed, who professed learning, were not less learned than at any other time; but of that middle race of students who read for pleasure or accomplishment, and who buy the numerous products

of modern typography, the number was then comparatively small. To prove the paucity of readers, it may be sufficient to remark, that the nation had been satisfied from 1623 to 1664, that is, forty-one years, with only two editions of the works of Shakespeare, which, probably, did not together make one thousand copies.

The sale of thirteen hundred copies in two years, in opposition to so much recent enmity, and to a style of versification new to all, and disgusting to many, was an uncommon example of the prevalence of genius. The demand did not immediately increase; for many more readers than were supplied at first the nation did not afford. Only three thousand were sold in eleven years; for it forced its way without assistance; its admirers did not dare to publish their opinion; and the opportunities now given of attracting notice by advertisements were then very few; the means of proclaiming the publication of new books have been produced by that general literature which now pervades the nation through all its ranks.

But the reputation and price of the copy still advanced, till the revolution put an end to the secrecy of love, and Paradise Lost broke into open view with sufficient security of kind reception.

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked its reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current, through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confi-

dent, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting, without impatience, the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.

In the mean time he continued his studies, and supplied the want of sight by a very odd expedient, of which Philips gives the following account:

Mr. Philips tells us, "that though our author had daily about him one or other to read, some persons of man's estate, who, of their own accord, greedily catched at the opportunity of being his readers, that they might as well reap the benefit of what they read to him, as oblige him by the benefit of their reading; and others of younger years were sent by their parents to the same end; yet excusing only the eldest daughter by reason of her bodily infirmity, and difficult utterance of speech, (which, to say truth, I doubt was the principal cause of excusing her,) the other two were condemned to the performance of reading, and exactly pronouncing of all the languages of whatever book he should, at one time or other, think fit to peruse, viz. the Hebrew, (and I think the Syriac,) the Greek, the Latin, the Italian, Spanish, and French. All which sorts of books to be confined to read, without understanding one word, must needs be a trial of patience almost beyond endurance. Yet it was endured by both for a long time, though the irksomeness of this employment could not be always concealed, but broke out more and more into expressions of uneasiness; so that, at length, they were all, even

the eldest also, sent out to learn some curious and ingenious sorts of manufacture, that are proper for women to learn, particularly embroideries in gold or silver."

In the scene of misery which this mode of intellectual labour sets before our eyes, it is hard to determine whether the daughters or the father are most to be lamented. A language not understood can never be so read as to give pleasure, and, very seldom, so as to convey meaning. If few men would have had resolution to write books with such embarrassments, few, likewise, would have wanted ability to find some better expedient.

Three years after his Paradise Lost, 1667, he published his History of England, comprising the whole fable of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and continued to the Norman invasion. Why he should have given the first part, which he seems not to believe, and which is universally rejected, it is difficult to conjecture. The style is harsh; but it has something of rough vigour, which, perhaps, may often strike, though it cannot please.

On this history the licenser again fixed his claws, and, before he would transmit it to the press, tore out several parts. Some censures of the Saxon monks were taken away, lest they should be applied to the modern clergy; and a character of the long parliament, and assembly of divines, was excluded; of which the author gave a copy to the earl of Anglesea, and which, being afterwards published, has been since inserted in its proper place.

The same year were printed Paradise Regained; and Sampson Agonistes, a tragedy written in imitation of the ancients, and never designed by the author for the stage. As these poems were published by another bookseller, it has been asked, whether Simmons was discouraged from receiving them by the slow sale of the former? Why a writer changed his bookseller a hundred years ago, I am far from hoping to discover. Certainly, he who in two years sells thirteen hundred copies of a volume in quarto, bought for two payments of five pounds each, has no reason to repent his purchase.

When Milton showed Paradise Regained to Elwood, "this," said he, "is owing to you; for you put it in my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which otherwise I had not thought of."

His last poetical offspring was his favourite. He could not, as Elwood relates, endure to hear Paradise Lost preferred to Paradise Regained. Many causes may vitiate a writer's judgment of his own works. On that which has cost him much labour he sets a high value, because he is unwilling to think that he has been diligent in vain; what has been produced without toilsome efforts, is considered with delight, as a proof of vigorous faculties and fertile invention; and the last work, whatever it be, has, necessarily, most of the grace of novelty. Milton, however it happened, had this prejudice, and had it to himself.

To that multiplicity of attainments, and extent of comprehension, that entitled this great author to

our veneration, may be added a kind of humble dignity, which did not disdain the meanest services to literature. The epick poet, the controvertist, the politician, having already descended to accommodate children with a book of rudiments, now, in the last years of his life, composed a book of logick, for the initiation of students in philosophy; and published, 1672, Artis Logicæ plenior Institutio ad Petri Rami Methodum concinnata; that is, a new scheme of logick, according to the method of Ramus. I know not whether, even in this book, he did not intend an act of hostility against the universities; for Ramus was one of the first oppugners of the old philosophy, who disturbed with innovations the quiet of the schools.

His polemical disposition again revived. He had now been safe so long, that he forgot his fears, and published a Treatise of true Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and the best means to prevent the growth of Popery.

But this little tract is modestly written, with respectful mention of the church of England, and an appeal to the thirty-nine articles. His principle of toleration is, agreement in the sufficiency of the scriptures; and he extends it to all who, whatever their opinions are, profess to derive them from the sacred books. The papists appeal to other testimonies, and are, therefore, in his opinion, not to be permitted the liberty of either publick or private worship; for, though they plead conscience, "we have no warrant," he says, "to regard conscience, which is not grounded in scripture."

Those who are not convinced by his reasons, may be, perhaps, delighted with his wit. The term "Roman catholick is," he says, "one of the pope's bulls; it is particular universal, or catholick schismatick."

He has, however, something better. As the best preservative against popery, he recommends the diligent perusal of the scriptures, a duty, from which he warns the busy part of mankind not to think themselves excused.

He now reprinted his juvenile poems, with some additions.

In the last year of his life he sent to the press, seeming to take delight in publication, a collection of Familiar Epistles in Latin; to which, being too few to make a volume, he added some academical exercises, which, perhaps, he perused with pleasure, as they recalled to his memory the days of youth, but for which nothing but veneration for his name could now procure a reader.

When he had attained his sixty-sixth year, the gout, with which he had been long tormented, prevailed over the enfeebled powers of nature. He died by a quiet and silent expiration, about the tenth of November, 1674, at his house in Bunhill fields; and was buried next his father in the chancel of St. Giles at Cripplegate. His funeral was very splendidly and numerously attended.

Upon his grave there is supposed to have been no memorial; but in our time a monument has been erected in Westminster Abbey "to the author of

Paradise Lost," by Mr. Benson, who has, in the inscription, bestowed more words upon himself than upon Milton.

When the inscription for the monument of Philips, in which he was said to be "soli Miltono secundus," was exhibited to Dr. Sprat, then dean of Westminster, he refused to admit it; the name of Milton was, in his opinion, too detestable to be read on the wall of a building dedicated to devotion. Atterbury, who succeeded him, being author of the inscription, permitted its reception. "And such has been the change of publick opinion," said Dr. Gregory, from whom I heard this account, "that I have seen erected in the church a statue of that man, whose name I once knew considered as a pollution of its walls."

Milton has the reputation of having been, in his youth, eminently beautiful, so as to have been called the lady of his college. His hair, which was of a light brown, parted at the foretop, and hung down upon his shoulders, according to the picture which he has given of Adam. He was, however, not of the heroick stature, but rather below the middle size[d], according to Mr. Richardson, who mentions him as having narrowly escaped from being "short and thick." He was vigorous and active, and delighted in the exercise of the sword, in which he is related to have

[d] "Statura fateor non sum procera: sed quæ mediocri tamen quam parvæ proprior sit: sed quid si parva, qua et summi sæpe tum pace tum bello viri fuere, quanquam parva cur dicitur, quæ ad virtutem satis magna est." Defensio Secunda. Ed.

been eminently skilful. His weapon was, I believe, not the rapier, but the backsword, of which he recommends the use in his book on education.

His eyes are said never to have been bright; but, if he was a dexterous fencer, they must have been once quick.

His domestick habits, so far as they are known, were those of a severe student. He drank little strong drink of any kind, and fed without excess in quantity, and, in his earlier years, without delicacy of choice. In his youth he studied late at night; but afterwards changed his hours, and rested in bed from nine till four in the summer, and five in the winter. The course of his day was best known after he was blind. When he first rose, he heard a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and then studied till twelve; then took some exercise for an hour; then dined, then played on the organ, and sang, or heard another sing; then studied to six; then entertained his visiters till eight; then supped, and, after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water, went to bed.

So is his life described: but this even tenour appears attainable only in colleges. He that lives in the world will, sometimes, have the succession of his practice broken and confused. Visiters, of whom Milton is represented to have had great numbers, will come and stay unseasonably; business, of which every man has some, must be done when others will do it.

When he did not care to rise early, he had something read to him by his bedside; perhaps, at this

time, his daughters were employed. He composed much in the morning, and dictated in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbowchair, with his leg thrown over the arm.

Fortune appears not to have had much of his care. In the civil wars he lent his personal estate to the parliament; but when, after the contest was decided, he solicited repayment, he met not only with neglect, but "sharp rebuke;" and, having tired both himself and his friends, was given up to poverty and hopeless indignation, till he showed how able he was to do greater service. He was then made Latin secretary, with two hundred pounds a year; and had a thousand pounds for Defence of the People. His widow, who, after his death, retired to Namptwich, in Cheshire, and died about1729, is said to have reported, that he lost two thousand pounds by intrusting it to a scrivener; and that, in the general depredation upon the church, he had grasped an estate of about sixty pounds a year belonging to Westminster Abbey, which, like other sharers of the plunder of rebellion, he was afterwards obliged to return. Two thousand pounds, which he had placed in the excise-office, were also lost. There is yet no reason to believe that he was ever reduced to indigence. His wants, being few, were competently supplied. He sold his library before his death, and left his family fifteen hundred pounds, on which his widow laid hold, and only gave one hundred to each of his daughters.

His literature was unquestionably great. He read

all the languages which are considered either as learned or polite: Hebrew, with its two dialects, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish. In Latin his skill was such as places him in the first rank of writers and criticks; and he appears to have cultivated Italian with uncommon diligence. The books in which his daughter, who used to read to him, represented him as most delighting, after Homer, which he could almost repeat, were Ovid's Metamorphoses and Euripides. His Euripides is, by Mr. Cradock's kindness, now in my hands: the margin is sometimes noted; but I have found nothing remarkable.

Of the English poets, he set most value upon Spenser, Shakespeare, and Cowley. Spenser was apparently his favourite; Shakespeare he may easily be supposed to like, with every other skilful reader; but I should not have expected that Cowley, whose ideas of excellence were so different from his own, would have had much of his approbation. His character of Dryden, who sometimes visited him, was, that he was a good rhymist, but no poet.

His theological opinions are said to have been first Calvinistical; and afterwards, perhaps, when he began to hate the presbyterians, to have tended towards Arminianism. In the mixed questions of theology and government, he never thinks that he can recede far enough from popery, or prelacy; but what Baudius says of Erasmus seems applicable to him, "magis habuit quod fugeret, quam quod sequeretur." He had determined rather what to condemn, than what to approve. He has not associated himself

with any denomination of protestants; we know rather what he was not, than what he was. He was not of the church of Rome; he was not of the church of England.

To be of no church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by faith and hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpressed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to have had full conviction of the truth of christianity, and to have regarded the holy scriptures with the profoundest veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of providence, yet grew old without any visible worship. In the distribution of his hours, there was no hour of prayer, either solitary or with his household; omitting publick prayers, he omitted all.

Of this omission the reason has been sought upon a supposition, which ought never to be made, that men live with their own approbation, and justify their conduct to themselves. Prayer certainly was not thought superfluous by him, who represents our first parents as praying acceptably in the state of innocence, and efficaciously after their fall. That he lived without prayer can hardly be affirmed; his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer. The neglect of it in his family was, probably, a fault for which he condemned himself, and which he in-

tended to correct, but that death, as too often happens, intercepted his reformation.

His political notions were those of an acrimonious and surly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reason than that "a popular government was the most frugal; for the trappings of a monarchy would set up an ordinary commonwealth." It is surely very shallow policy that supposes money to be the chief good; and even this, without considering that the support and expense of a court is, for the most part, only a particular kind of traffick, by which money is circulated, without any national impoverishment.

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of control, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the state, and prelates in the church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected, that his predominant desire was to destroy, rather than establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty, as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed, that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character, in domestick relations, is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferiour beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suf-

fered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought women made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.

Of his family some account may be expected. His sister, first married to Mr. Philips, afterwards married Mr. Agar, a friend of her first husband, who succeeded him in the crown-office. She had, by her first husband, Edward and John, the two nephews whom Milton educated; and, by her second, two daughters.

His brother, sir Christopher, had two daughters, Mary and Catharine[e] ; and a son, Thomas, who succeeded Agar in the crown-office, and left a daughter living, in 1749, in Grosvenor street.

Milton had children only by his first wife; Anne, Mary, and Deborah. Anne, though deformed, married a master-builder, and died of her first child. Mary died single. Deborah married Abraham Clark, a weaver in Spital fields, and lived seventy-six years, to August, 1727. This is the daughter of whom publick mention has been made. She could repeat the first lines of Homer, the Metamorphoses, and some of Euripides, by having often read them. Yet here incredulity is ready to make a stand. Many repetitions are necessary to fix in the memory lines not

[e] Both these persons were living at Holloway, about the year 1734, and, at that time, possessed such a degree of health and strength, as enabled them, on Sundays and prayer-days, to walk a mile up a steep hill to Highgate chapel. One of them was ninety-two at the time of her death. Their parentage was known to few, and their names were corrupted into Melton. By the crown-office, mentioned in the two last paragraphs, we are to understand the crown-office of the court of Chancery. H.

understood; and why should Milton wish or want to hear them so often? These lines were at the beginning of the poems. Of a book written in a language not understood, the beginning raises no more attention than the end; and as those that understand it know commonly the beginning best, its rehearsal will seldom be necessary. It is not likely that Milton required any passage to be so much repeated, as that his daughter could learn it; nor likely that he desired the initial lines to be read at all; nor that the daughter, weary of the drudgery of pronouncing unideal sounds, would voluntarily commit them to memory.

To this gentlewoman Addison made a present, and promised some establishment, but died soon after. Queen Caroline sent her fifty guineas. She had seven sons and three daughters; but none of them had any children, except her son Caleb and her daughter Elizabeth. Caleb went to Fort St. George, in the East Indies, and had two sons, of whom nothing is now known. Elizabeth married Thomas Foster, a weaver in Spital fields; and had seven children, who all died. She kept a petty grocer's or chandler's shop, first at Holloway, and afterwards in Cock lane, near Shoreditch church. She knew little of her grandfather, and that little was not good. She told of his harshness to his daughters, and his refusal to have them taught to write; and, in opposition to other accounts, represented him as delicate, though temperate, in his diet.

In 1750, April 5, Comus was played for her benefit. She had so little acquaintance with diversion or

gaiety, that she did not know what was intended, when a benefit was offered her. The profits of the night were only one hundred and thirty pounds, though Dr. Newton brought a large contribution; and twenty pounds were given by Tonson, a man who is to be praised as often as he is named. Of this sum one hundred pounds were placed in the stocks, after some debate between her and her husband, in whose name it should be entered; and the rest augmented their little stock, with which they removed to Islington. This was the greatest benefaction that Paradise Lost ever procured the author's descendants; and to this he, who has now attempted to relate his life, had the honour of contributing a prologue[f].

In the examination of Milton's poetical works, I shall pay so much regard to time as to begin with his juvenile productions. For his early pieces he seems to have had a degree of fondness not very laudable; what he has once written he resolves to preserve, and gives to the publick an unfinished poem, which he broke off, because he was "nothing satisfied with what he had done," supposing his readers less nice than himself. These preludes to his future labours are in Italian, Latin, and English. Of the Italian I cannot pretend to speak as a critick; but I have heard them commended by a man well qualified to decide their merit. The Latin pieces are lusciously elegant; but the delight which they afford

[f] Printed in the first volume of this collection.

is rather by the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention, or vigour of sentiment. They are not all of equal value; the elegies excel the odes; and some of the exercises on Gunpowder Treason might have been spared.

The English poems, though they make no promises of Paradise Lost[g], have this evidence of genius, that they have a cast original and unborrowed. But their peculiarity is not excellence; if they differ from the verses of others, they differ for the worse; for they are too often distinguished by repulsive harshness; the combinations of words are new, but they are not pleasing; the rhymes and epithets seem to be laboriously sought, and violently applied.

That, in the early part of his life, he wrote with much care appears from his manuscripts, happily preserved at Cambridge, in which many of his smaller works are found, as they were first written, with the subsequent corrections. Such relicks show how excellence is acquired; what we hope ever to do with ease, we must learn first to do with diligence.

Those who admire the beauties of this great poet sometimes force their own judgment into false approbation of his little pieces, and prevail upon themselves to think that admirable which is only singular. All that short compositions can commonly attain, is neatness and elegance. Milton never learned the

[g] With the exception of Comus, in which, Dr. J. afterwards says, may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of Paradise Lost. C.

art of doing little things with grace; he overlooked the milder excellence of suavity and softness: he was a lion, that had no skill "in dandling the kid."

One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed is Lycidas; of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing. What beauty there is, we must, therefore, seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius, nor tells of rough "satyrs and fauns with cloven heel." Where there is leisure for fiction, there is little grief.

In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral: easy, vulgar, and, therefore, disgusting; whatever images it can supply are long ago exhausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey, that they studied together, it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours, and the partner of his discoveries; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines?

> We drove afield, and both together heard,
> What time the grey fly winds her sultry horn,
> Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night.

We know that they never drove afield, and that they had no flocks to batten; and, though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true

meaning is so uncertain and remote, that it is never sought, because it cannot be known when it is found.

Among the flocks, and copses, and flowers, appear the heathen deities; Jove and Phœbus, Neptune and Æolus, with a long train of mythological imagery, such as a college easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge, or less exercise invention, than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping; and how one god asks another god what is become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy; he who thus praises will confer no honour.

This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions are mingled the most awful and sacred truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations. The shepherd, likewise, is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendent of a christian flock. Such equivocations are always unskilful; but here they are indecent, and, at least, approach to impiety, of which, however, I believe the writer not to have been conscious.

Such is the power of reputation justly acquired, that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read Lycidas with pleasure, had he not known the author.

Of the two pieces, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, I believe, opinion is uniform; every man that reads them, reads them with pleasure. The author's de-

sign is not, what Theobald has remarked, merely to show how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the same man, as he is differently disposed; but rather how, among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified.

The cheerful man hears the lark in the morning; the pensive man hears the nightingale in the evening. The cheerful man sees the cock strut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the wood; then walks, "not unseen," to observe the glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milkmaid, and view the labours of the ploughman and the mower: then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant; thus he pursues rural gaiety through a day of labour or of play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

The pensive man, at one time, walks "unseen" to muse at midnight; and, at another, hears the sullen curfew. If the weather drives him home, he sits in a room lighted only by "glowing embers;" or, by a lonely lamp, outwatches the north star, to discover the habitation of separate souls, and varies the shades of meditation, by contemplating the magnificent or pathetick scenes of tragick or epick poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he walks into the dark,

trackless woods[h], falls asleep by some murmuring water, and with melancholy enthusiasm expects some dream of prognostication, or some musick played by aerial performers.

Both mirth and melancholy are solitary, silent inhabitants of the breast, that neither receive nor transmit communication; no mention is, therefore, made of a philosophical friend, or a pleasant companion. The seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity, nor the gaiety from the pleasures of the bottle.

The man of cheerfulness, having exhausted the country, tries what "towered cities" will afford, and mingles with scenes of splendour, gay assemblies, and nuptial festivities; but he mingles a mere spectator, as, when the learned comedies of Jonson, or the wild dramas of Shakespeare, are exhibited, he attends the theatre.

The pensive man never loses himself in crowds, but walks the cloister, or frequents the cathedral. Milton probably had not yet forsaken the church.

Both his characters delight in musick; but he seems to think, that cheerful notes would have obtained, from Pluto, a complete dismission of Eurydice, of whom solemn sounds only procured a conditional release.

For the old age of cheerfulness he makes no pro-

[h] Here, as Warton justly observes, "Johnson has confounded two descriptions!" The melancholy man does not go out while it rains, but waits, till

——the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams. J. B.

vision; but melancholy he conducts with great dignity to the close of life. His cheerfulness is without levity, and his pensiveness without asperity.

Through these two poems the images are properly selected, and nicely distinguished; but the colours of the diction seem not sufficiently discriminated. I know not whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart. No mirth can, indeed, be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet some melancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination[1].

The greatest of his juvenile performances is the Masque of Comus, in which may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of Paradise Lost. Milton appears to have formed very early that system of diction, and mode of verse, which his maturer judgment approved, and from which he never endeavoured nor desired to deviate.

Nor does Comus afford only a specimen of his language; it exhibits, likewise, his power of description and his vigour of sentiment, employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and de-

[1] Mr. Warton intimates, and there can be little doubt of the truth of his conjecture, that Milton borrowed many of the images in these two fine poems from Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, a book published in 1621, and, at sundry times since, abounding in learning, curious information, and pleasantry. Mr. Warton says, that Milton appears to have been an attentive reader thereof; and to this assertion I add, of my own knowledge, that it was a book that Dr. Johnson frequently resorted to, as many others have done, for amusement after the fatigue of study. H.—Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, Johnson said, was the only book that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise. Boswell's Life, ii. 120.

scriptive epithets, embellish almost every period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it.

As a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A mask, in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted, must, indeed, be given up to all the freaks of imagination; but, so far as the action is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two brothers; who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together, in search of berries, too far to find their way back, and leave a helpless lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. This, however, is a defect overbalanced by its convenience.

What deserves more reprehension is, that the prologue spoken in the wild wood, by the attendant spirit, is addressed to the audience; a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramatick representation, that no precedents can support it[j].

The discourse of the spirit is too long; an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches; they have not the sprightliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question. The auditor, therefore, listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety.

[j] Surely there are precedents enough for the practice, though pessimi exempli, in Milton's favourite tragedian Euripides. Ed.

The song of Comus has airiness and jollity; but, what may recommend Milton's morals, as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleasure are so general, that they excite no distinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy.

The following soliloquies of Comus and the Lady are elegant, but tedious. The song must owe much to the voice, if it ever can delight. At last, the brothers enter with too much tranquillity; and, when they have feared, lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the elder makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher.

Then descends the spirit, in form of a shepherd; and the brother, instead of being in haste to ask his help, praises his singing, and inquires his business in that place. It is remarkable, that, at this interview, the brother, is taken with a short fit of rhyming. The spirit relates that the lady is in the power of Comus; the brother moralizes again; and the spirit makes a long narration, of no use, because it is false, and, therefore, unsuitable to a good being.

In all these parts the language is poetical, and the sentiments are generous; but there is something wanting to allure attention.

The dispute between the lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama, and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies to invite attention and detain it.

The songs are vigorous and full of imagery; but they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers.

Throughout the whole the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant, for dialogue. It is a drama in the epick style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive.

The sonnets were written in different parts of Milton's life, upon different occasions. They deserve not any particular criticism; for of the best it can only be said, that they are not bad; and, perhaps, only the eighth and the twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation. The fabrick of a sonnet, however adapted to the Italian language, has never succeeded in ours, which, having greater variety of termination, requires the rhymes to be often changed.

Those little pieces may be despatched without much anxiety; a greater work calls for greater care. I am now to examine Paradise Lost, a poem, which, considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect to performance the second, among the productions of the human mind.

By the general consent of criticks, the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epick poem, as it requires an assemblage of all the powers which are singly sufficient for other compositions. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason. Epick poetry undertakes to teach the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts, and, therefore, relates some great event in the most affecting manner. History

must supply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, must animate by dramatick energy, and diversify by retrospection and anticipation; morality must teach him the exact bounds, and different shades, of vice and virtue; from policy and the practice of life, he has to learn the discriminations of character, and the tendency of the passions, either single or combined; and physiology must supply him with illustrations and images. To put these materials to poetical use, is required an imagination capable of painting nature, and realizing fiction. Nor is he yet a poet till he has attained the whole extension of his language, distinguished all the delicacies of phrase, and all the colours of words, and learned to adjust their different sounds to all the varieties of metrical modulation.

Bossu is of opinion, that the poet's first work is to find a moral, which his fable is afterwards to illustrate and establish. This seems to have been the process only of Milton; the moral of other poems is incidental and consequent; in Milton's only it is essential and intrinsick. His purpose was the most useful and the most arduous: "to vindicate the ways of God to man;" to show the reasonableness of religion, and the necessity of obedience to the divine law.

To convey this moral, there must be a fable, a narration artfully constructed, so as to excite curiosity, and surprise expectation. In this part of his work, Milton must be confessed to have equalled every other poet. He has involved, in his account

of the fall of man, the events which preceded, and those that were to follow it; he has interwoven the whole system of theology with such propriety, that every part appears to be necessary; and scarcely any recital is wished shorter for the sake of quickening the progress of the main action.

The subject of an epick poem is naturally an event of great importance. That of Milton is not the destruction of a city, the conduct of a colony, or the foundation of an empire. His subject is the fate of worlds, the revolutions of heaven and of earth; rebellion against the supreme king, raised by the highest order of created beings; the overthrow of their host, and the punishment of their crime; the creation of a new race of reasonable creatures; their original happiness and innocence, their forfeiture of immortality, and their restoration to hope and peace.

Great events can be hastened or retarded only by persons of elevated dignity. Before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem, all other greatness shrinks away. The weakest of his agents are the highest and noblest of human beings, the original parents of mankind; with whose actions the elements consented; on whose rectitude, or deviation of will, depended the state of terrestrial nature, and the condition of all the future inhabitants of the globe. Of the other agents in the poem, the chief are such as it is irreverence to name on slight occasions. The rest were lower powers;

> ——of which the least could wield
> Those elements, and arm him with the force
> Of all their regions;

powers, which only the control of omnipotence restrains from laying creation waste, and filling the vast expanse of space with ruin and confusion. To display the motives and actions of beings thus superiour, so far as human reason can examine them, or human imagination represent them, is the task which this mighty poet has undertaken and performed.

In the examination of epick poems much speculation is commonly employed upon the characters. The characters in the Paradise Lost, which admit of examination, are those of angels and of man; of angels good and evil; of man in his innocent and sinful state.

Among the angels, the virtue of Raphael is mild and placid, of easy condescension and free communication; that of Michael is regal and lofty, and, as may seem, attentive to the dignity of his own nature. Abdiel and Gabriel appear occasionally, and act as every incident requires; the solitary fidelity of Abdiel is very amiably painted.

Of the evil angels the characters are more diversified. To Satan, as Addison observes, such sentiments are given as suit "the most exalted and most depraved being." Milton has been censured by Clarke[k], for the impiety which, sometimes, breaks from Satan's mouth; for there are thoughts, as he justly remarks, which no observation of character can justify, because no good man would willingly permit them to pass, however transiently, through

[k] Author of the Essay on Study.

his own mind. To make Satan speak as a rebel, without any such expressions as might taint the reader's imagination, was, indeed, one of the great difficulties in Milton's undertaking; and I cannot but think that he has extricated himself with great happiness. There is in Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The language of rebellion cannot be the same with that of obedience. The malignity of Satan foams in haughtiness and obstinacy; but his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked.

The other chiefs of the celestial rebellion are very judiciously discriminated in the first and second books; and the ferocious character of Moloch appears, both in the battle and the council, with exact consistency.

To Adam and to Eve are given, during their innocence, such sentiments as innocence can generate and utter. Their love is pure benevolence and mutual veneration; their repasts are without luxury, and their diligence without toil. Their addresses to their maker have little more than the voice of admiration and gratitude. Fruition left them nothing to ask; and innocence left them nothing to fear.

But with guilt enter distrust and discord, mutual accusation, and stubborn self-defence; they regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their creator as the avenger of their transgression. At last they seek shelter in his mercy, soften to repentance, and melt in supplication. Both before and after the fall, the superiority of Adam is diligently sustained.

Painted by Sir Josh de Reynolds P.R.A.

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Of the probable and the marvellous, two parts of a vulgar epick poem, which immerge the critick in deep consideration, the Paradise Lost requires little to be said. It contains the history of a miracle, of creation and redemption; it displays the power and the mercy of the supreme being; the probable, therefore, is marvellous, and the marvellous is probable. The substance of the narrative is truth; and, as truth allows no choice, it is, like necessity, superiour to rule. To the accidental or adventitious parts, as to every thing human, some slight exceptions may be made; but the main fabrick is immovably supported.

It is justly remarked by Addison, that this poem has, by the nature of its subject, the advantage above all others, that it is universally and perpetually interesting. All mankind will, through all ages, bear the same relation to Adam and to Eve, and must partake of that good and evil which extend to themselves.

Of the machinery, so called from θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, by which is meant the occasional interposition of supernatural power, another fertile topick of critical remarks, here is no room to speak, because every thing is done under the immediate and visible direction of heaven; but the rule is so far observed, that no part of the action could have been accomplished by any other means.

Of episodes, I think, there are only two, contained in Raphael's relation of the war in heaven, and Michael's prophetick account of the changes to hap-

pen in this world. Both are closely connected with the great action; one was necessary to Adam, as a warning, the other, as a consolation.

To the completeness or integrity of the design, nothing can be objected; it has, distinctly and clearly, what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end. There is, perhaps, no poem, of the same length, from which so little can be taken without apparent mutilation. Here are no funeral games, nor is there any long description of a shield. The short digressions at the beginning of the third, seventh, and ninth books, might, doubtless, be spared; but superfluities so beautiful, who would take away? or who does not wish that the author of the Iliad had gratified succeeding ages with a little knowledge of himself? Perhaps no passages are more frequently or more attentively read, than those extrinsick paragraphs; and, since the end of poetry is pleasure, that cannot be unpoetical with which all are pleased.

The questions, whether the action of the poem be strictly one, whether the poem can be properly termed heroick, and who is the hero, are raised by such readers as draw their principles of judgment rather from books than from reason. Milton, though he entitled Paradise Lost only a poem, yet calls it himself heroick song. Dryden petulantly and indecently denies the heroism of Adam, because he was overcome; but there is no reason why the hero should not be unfortunate, except established practice, since success and virtue do not go necessarily

together. Cato is the hero of Lucan; but Lucan's authority will not be suffered by Quintilian to decide. However, if success be necessary, Adam's deceiver was at last crushed; Adam was restored to his maker's favour, and, therefore, may securely resume his human rank.

After the scheme and fabrick of the poem, must be considered its component parts, the sentiments and the diction.

The sentiments, as expressive of manners, or appropriated to characters, are, for the greater part, unexceptionably just.

Splendid passages, containing lessons of morality, or precepts of prudence, occur seldom. Such is the original formation of this poem, that, as it admits no human manners, till the fall, it can give little assistance to human conduct. Its end is to raise the thoughts above sublunary cares or pleasures. Yet the praise of that fortitude, with which Abdiel maintained his singularity of virtue against the scorn of multitudes, may be accommodated to all times; and Raphael's reproof of Adam's curiosity after the planetary motions, with the answer returned by Adam, may be confidently opposed to any rule of life which any poet has delivered.

The thoughts which are occasionally called forth in the progress, are such as could only be produced by an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which materials were supplied by incessant study and unlimited curiosity. The heat of Milton's mind may be said to sublimate his learning,

to throw off into his work the spirit of science, unmingled with its grosser parts.

He had considered creation, in its whole extent, and his descriptions are, therefore, learned. He had accustomed his imagination to unrestrained indulgence, and his conceptions, therefore, were extensive. The characteristick quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port is gigantick loftiness[1]. He can please, when pleasure is required; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.

He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful; he, therefore, chose a subject on which too much could not be said, on which he might tire his fancy, without the censure of extravagance.

The appearances of nature, and the occurrences of life, did not satiate his appetite of greatness. To paint things as they are requires a minute attention, and employs the memory rather than the fancy. Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discovery, into worlds where only imagination can travel, and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish

[1] Algarotti terms it, "gigantesca sublimita Miltoniana." Dr. J.

sentiment and action to superiour beings, to trace the counsels of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven.

But he could not be always in other worlds; he must sometimes revisit earth, and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind, he gives delight by its fertility.

Whatever be his subject, he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and descriptions of the scenes, or operations of nature, do not seem to be always copied from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness, and energy of immediate observation. He saw nature, as Dryden expresses it, "through the spectacles of books;" and, on most occasions, calls learning to his assistance. The garden of Eden brings to his mind the vale of Enna, where Proserpine was gathering flowers. Satan makes his way through fighting elements, like Argo between the Cyanean rocks, or Ulysses between the two Sicilian whirlpools, when he shunned Charybdis on the "larboard." The mythological allusions have been justly censured, as not being always used with notice of their vanity; but they contribute variety to the narration, and produce an alternate exercise of the memory and the fancy.

His similes are less numerous, and more various, than those of his predecessors. But he does not confine himself within the limits of rigorous comparison; his great excellence is amplitude; and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimen-

sions which the occasion required. Thus comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope, and all the wonders which the telescope discovers.

Of his moral sentiments it is hardly praise to affirm that they excel those of all other poets; for this superiority he was indebted to his acquaintance with the sacred writings. The ancient epick poets, wanting the light of revelation, were very unskilful teachers of virtue: their principal characters may be great, but they are not amiable. The reader may rise from their works with a greater degree of active or passive fortitude, and sometimes of prudence; but he will be able to carry away few precepts of justice, and none of mercy.

From the Italian writers it appears, that the advantages of even christian knowledge may be possessed in vain. Ariosto's pravity is generally known; and, though the Deliverance of Jerusalem may be considered as a sacred subject, the poet has been very sparing of moral instruction.

In Milton every line breathes sanctity of thought, and purity of manners, except when the train of the narration requires the introduction of the rebellious spirits; and even they are compelled to acknowledge their subjection to God, in such a manner as excites reverence, and confirms piety.

Of human beings there are but two; but those two are the parents of mankind, venerable before their fall for dignity and innocence, and amiable after it for repentance and submission. In the first

state, their affection is tender without weakness, and their piety sublime without presumption. When they have sinned, they show how discord begins in mutual frailty, and how it ought to cease in mutual forbearance; how confidence of the divine favour is forfeited by sin; and how hope of pardon may be obtained by penitence and prayer. A state of innocence we can only conceive, if, indeed, in our present misery, it be possible to conceive it; but the sentiments and worship proper to a fallen and offending being, we have all to learn, as we have all to practise.

The poet, whatever be done, is always great. Our progenitors, in their first state, conversed with angels; even when folly and sin had degraded them, they had not, in their humiliation, "the port of mean suitors;" and they rise again to reverential regard, when we find that their prayers were heard.

As human passions did not enter the world, before the fall, there is, in the Paradise Lost, little opportunity for the pathetick; but what little there is has not been lost. That passion which is peculiar to rational nature, the anguish arising from the consciousness of transgression, and the horrours attending the sense of the divine displeasure, are very justly described and forcibly impressed. But the passions are moved only on one occasion; sublimity is the general and prevailing quality of this poem; sublimity variously modified, sometimes descriptive, sometimes argumentative.

The defects and faults of Paradise Lost, for faults and defects every work of man must have, it is the

business of impartial criticism to discover. As, in displaying the excellence of Milton, I have not made long quotations, because of selecting beauties there had been no end, I shall, in the same general manner, mention that which seems to deserve censure; for what Englishman can take delight in transcribing passages, which, if they lessen the reputation of Milton, diminish, in some degree, the honour of our country?

The generality of my scheme does not admit the frequent notice of verbal inaccuracies; which Bentley, perhaps, better skilled in grammar than in poetry, has often found, though he sometimes made them, and which he imputed to the obtrusions of a reviser, whom the author's blindness obliged him to employ; a supposition rash and groundless, if he thought it true; and vile and pernicious, if, as is said, he, in private, allowed it to be false.

The plan of Paradise Lost has this inconvenience, that it comprises neither human actions nor human manners[m]. The man and woman who act and suffer are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged; beholds no condition in which he can, by any effort of imagination, place himself; he has, therefore, little natural curiosity or sympathy.

We all, indeed, feel the effect of Adam's disobedience; we all sin, like Adam, and, like him, must all bewail our offences; we have restless and insidi-

[m]But, says Dr. Warton, it has, throughout, a reference to human life and actions. C.

ous enemies in the fallen angels; and in the blessed spirits we have guardians and friends; in the redemption of mankind we hope to be included; and in the description of heaven and hell we are, surely, interested, as we are all to reside, hereafter, either in the regions of horrour or of bliss.

But these truths are too important to be new; they have been taught to our infancy; they have mingled with our solitary thoughts and familiar conversations, and are habitually interwoven with the whole texture of life. Being, therefore, not new, they raise no unaccustomed emotion in the mind; what we knew before, we cannot learn; what is not unexpected, cannot surprise.

Of the ideas suggested by these awful scenes, from some we recede with reverence, except when stated hours require their association; and from others we shrink with horrour, or admit them only as salutary inflictions, as counterpoises to our interests and passions. Such images rather obstruct the career of fancy than incite it.

Pleasure and terrour are, indeed, the genuine sources of poetry; but poetical pleasure must be such as human imagination can, at least, conceive; and poetical terrour, such as human strength and fortitude may combat. The good and evil of eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit; the mind sinks under them, in passive helplessness, content with calm belief and humble adoration.

Known truths, however, may take a different appearance, and be conveyed to the mind by a new

train of intermediate images. This Milton has undertaken, and performed with pregnancy and vigour of mind peculiar to himself. Whoever considers the few radical positions which the scriptures afforded him, will wonder by what energetick operation he expanded them to such extent, and ramified them to so much variety, restrained, as he was, by religious reverence from licentiousness of fiction.

Here is a full display of the united force of study and genius; of a great accumulation of materials, with judgment to digest, and fancy to combine them: Milton was able to select from nature or from story, from ancient fable or from modern science, whatever could illustrate or adorn his thoughts. An accumulation of knowledge impregnated his mind, fermented by study, and exalted by imagination.

It has been, therefore, said, without an indecent hyperbole, by one of his encomiasts, that in reading Paradise Lost, we read a book of universal knowledge.

But original deficience cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt. Paradise Lost is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. None ever wished it longer than it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master, and seek for companions.

Another inconvenience of Milton's design is, that it requires the description of what cannot be described, the agency of spirits. He saw that immateri-

ality supplied no images, and that he could not show angels acting but by instruments of action; he, therefore, invested them with form and matter. This, being necessary, was, therefore, defensible; and he should have secured the consistency of his system, by keeping immateriality out of sight, and enticing his reader to drop it from his thoughts. But he has, unhappily, perplexed his poetry with his philosophy. His infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit, and sometimes animated body. When Satan walks with his lance upon the "burning marl," he has a body; when, in his passage between hell and the new world, he is in danger of sinking in the vacuity, and is supported by a gust of rising vapours, he has a body; when he animates the toad, he seems to be mere spirit, that can penetrate matter at pleasure; when he starts "up in his own shape," he has, at least, a determined form; and, when he is brought before Gabriel, he has "a spear and a shield," which he had the power of hiding in the toad, though the arms of the contending angels are evidently material.

The vulgar inhabitants of Pandæmonium, being "incorporeal spirits," are "at large, though without number," in a limited space: yet, in the battle, when they were overwhelmed by mountains, their armour hurt them, "crushed in upon their substance, now grown gross by sinning." This, likewise, happened to the uncorrupted angels, who were overthrown the "sooner for their arms, for unarmed they might easily, as spirits, have evaded by contraction or remove." Even as spirits they are hardly spiritual;

for "contraction" and "remove" are images of matter; but if they could have escaped without their armour, they might have escaped from it, and left only the empty cover to be battered. Uriel, when he rides on a sunbeam, is material; Satan is material when he is afraid of the prowess of Adam.

The confusion of spirit and matter, which pervades the whole narration of the war of heaven, fills it with incongruity; and the book in which it is related is, I believe, the favourite of children, and gradually neglected, as knowledge is increased.

After the operation of immaterial agents which cannot be explained, may be considered that of allegorical persons, which have no real existence. To exalt causes into agents, to invest abstract ideas with form, and animate them with activity, has always been the right of poetry. But such airy beings are, for the most part, suffered only to do their natural office, and retire. Thus fame tells a tale, and victory hovers over a general, or perches on a standard; but fame and victory can do no more. To give them any real employment, or ascribe to them any material agency, is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to nonentity. In the Prometheus of Æschylus, we see violence and strength, and in the Alcestis of Euripides, we see death brought upon the stage, all as active persons of the drama; but no precedents can justify absurdity.

Milton's allegory of sin and death is, undoubtedly, faulty. Sin is, indeed, the mother of death, and may

be allowed to be the portress of hell; but when they stop the journey of Satan, a journey described as real, and when death offers him battle, the allegory is broken. That sin and death should have shown the way to hell, might have been allowed; but they cannot facilitate the passage by building a bridge, because the difficulty of Satan's passage is described as real and sensible, and the bridge ought to be only figurative. The hell assigned to the rebellious spirits is described as not less local than the residence of man. It is placed in some distant part of space, separated from the regions of harmony and order by a chaotick waste and an unoccupied vacuity; but sin and death worked up "a mole of aggravated soil," cemented with "asphaltus;" a work too bulky for ideal architects.

This unskilful allegory appears to me one of the greatest faults of the poem; and to this there was no temptation but the author's opinion of its beauty.

To the conduct of the narrative some objections may be made. Satan is, with great expectation, brought before Gabriel in Paradise, and is suffered to go away unmolested. The creation of man is represented as the consequence of the vacuity left in heaven by the expulsion of the rebels; yet Satan mentions it as a report "rife in heaven" before his departure.

To find sentiments for the state of innocence was very difficult; and something of anticipation, perhaps, is now and then discovered. Adam's discourse

of dreams seems not to be the speculation of a new-created being. I know not whether his answer to the angel's reproof for curiosity does not want something of propriety; it is the speech of a man acquainted with many other men. Some philosophical notions, especially when the philosophy is false, might have been better omitted. The angel, in a comparison, speaks of "timorous deer," before deer were yet timorous, and before Adam could understand the comparison.

Dryden remarks, that Milton has some flats among his elevations. This is only to say, that all the parts are not equal. In every work, one part must be for the sake of others; a palace must have passages; a poem must have transitions. It is no more to be required that wit should always be blazing, than that the sun should always stand at noon. In a great work there is a vicissitude of luminous and opaque parts, as there is in the world a succession of day and night. Milton, when he has expatiated in the sky, may be allowed, sometimes, to revisit earth; for what other author ever soared so high, or sustained his flight so long?

Milton, being well versed in the Italian poets, appears to have borrowed often from them; and, as every man catches something from his companions, his desire of imitating Ariosto's levity has disgraced his work with the Paradise of Fools; a fiction not, in itself, ill imagined, but too ludicrous for its place.

His play on words, in which he delights too often; his equivocations, which Bentley endeavours to de-

fend by the example of the ancients; his unnecessary and ungraceful use of terms of art; it is not necessary to mention, because they are easily remarked, and generally censured; and, at last, bear so little proportion to the whole, that they scarcely deserve the attention of a critick.

Such are the faults of that wonderful performance, Paradise Lost; which he who can put in balance with its beauties must be considered not as nice but as dull; as less to be censured for want of candour, than pitied for want of sensibility.

Of Paradise Regained, the general judgment seems now to be right, that it is, in many parts, elegant, and everywhere instructive. It was not to be supposed that the writer of Paradise Lost could ever write without great effusions of fancy, and exalted precepts of wisdom. The basis of Paradise Regained is narrow; a dialogue without action can never please, like an union of the narrative and dramatick powers. Had this poem been written not by Milton, but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise.

If Paradise Regained has been too much depreciated, Sampson Agonistes has, in requital, been too much admired. It could only be by long prejudice, and the bigotry of learning, that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies, with their encumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and English stages; and it is only by a blind confidence in the reputation of Milton, that a drama can be praised, in which the intermediate parts have neither

cause nor consequence, neither hasten nor retard the catastrophe.

In this tragedy are, however, many particular beauties, many just sentiments and striking lines; but it wants that power of attracting the attention, which a well-connected plan produces.

Milton would not have excelled in dramatick writing; he knew human nature only in the gross, and had never studied the shades of character, nor the combinations of concurring, or the perplexity of contending passions. He had read much, and knew what books could teach; but had mingled little in the world, and was deficient in the knowledge which experience must confer.

Through all his greater works there prevails an uniform peculiarity of diction, a mode and cast of expression which bears little resemblance to that of any former writer; and which is so far removed from common use, that an unlearned reader, when he first opens his book, finds himself surprised by a new language.

This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suitable to the grandeur of his ideas. "Our language," says Addison, "sunk under him." But the truth is, that, both in prose and verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantick principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned; for there judgment operates freely, neither softened by the beauty, nor

awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and a nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration.

Milton's style was not modified by his subject; what is shown with greater extent in Paradise Lost may be found in Comus. One source of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuscan poets; the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian; perhaps, sometimes, combined with other tongues.

Of him, at last, may be said what Jonson says of Spenser, that "he wrote no language," but has formed what Butler calls a "Babylonish dialect," in itself harsh and barbarous, but made by exalted genius and extensive learning the vehicle of so much instruction, and so much pleasure, that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity.

Whatever be the faults of his diction, he cannot want the praise of copiousness and variety; he was master of his language in its full extent; and has selected the melodious words with such diligence, that from his book alone the art of English poetry might be learned.

After his diction, something must be said of his versification. The "measure," he says, "is the English heroick verse without rhyme." Of this mode he had many examples among the Italians, and some in his own country. The Earl of Surrey is said to have translated one of Virgil's books without

rhyme[n]; and, beside our tragedies, a few short poems had appeared in blank verse, particularly one tending to reconcile the nation to Raleigh's wild attempt upon Guiana, and probably written by Raleigh himself These petty performances cannot be supposed to have much influenced Milton, who, more probably took his hint from Trissino's Italia Liberata; and, finding blank verse easier than rhyme, was desirous of persuading himself that it is better.

"Rhyme," he says, and says truly, "is no necessary adjunct of true poetry." But, perhaps, of poetry, as a mental operation, metre or musick is no necessary adjunct: it is, however, by the musick of metre that poetry has been discriminated in all languages; and, in languages melodiously constructed with a due proportion of long and short syllables, metre is sufficient. But one language cannot communicate its rules to another; where metre is scanty and imperfect, some help is necessary. The musick of the English heroick lines strikes the ear so faintly, that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line cooperate together; this cooperation can be only obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another, as a distinct system of sounds; and this distinctness is obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few skilful and happy

[n] The earl of Surrey translated two books of Virgil without rhyme; the second and the fourth. J. B.

readers of Milton, who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. "Blank verse," said an ingenious critick, "seems to be verse only to the eye."

Poetry may subsist without rhyme, but English poetry will not often please; nor can rhyme ever be safely spared, but where the subject is able to support itself. Blank verse makes some approach to that which is called the lapidary style; has neither the easiness of prose, nor the melody of numbers, and, therefore, tires by long continuance. Of the Italian writers without rhyme, whom Milton alleges as precedents, not one is popular; what reason could urge in its defence, has been confuted by the ear.

But, whatever be the advantage of rhyme, I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer; for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is; yet, like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing may write blank verse; but those that hope only to please must condescend to rhyme.

The highest praise of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be said to have contrived the structure of an epick poem, and, therefore, owes reverence to that vigour and amplitude of mind to which all generations must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interposition of dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprise and enchain attention. But, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is, perhaps, the least indebted. He was

naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuse admission to the thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he neither courted nor received support; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained; no exchange of praise, nor solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance, and in blindness; but difficulties vanished at his touch; he was born for whatever is arduous; and his work is not the greatest of heroick poems, only because it is not the first.

# BUTLER

OF the great author of Hudibras there is a life prefixed to the later editions of his poem, by an unknown writer, and, therefore, of disputable authority; and some account is incidentally given by Wood, who confesses the uncertainty of his own narrative; more, however, than they knew cannot now be learned, and nothing remains but to compare and copy them.

Samuel Butler was born in the parish of Strensham, in Worcestershire, according to his biographer, in 1612. This account Dr. Nash finds confirmed by the register. He was christened Feb. 14.

His father's condition is variously represented: Wood mentions him as competently wealthy; but Mr. Longueville, the son of Butler's principal friend, says he was an honest farmer, with some small estate, who made a shift to educate his son at the grammar school of Worcester, under Mr. Henry Bright°,

° These are the words of the author of the short account of Butler, prefixed to Hudibras, which Dr. Johnson, notwithstanding what he says above, seems to have supposed was written by Mr. Longueville, the father; but the contrary is to be inferred from a subsequent passage, wherein the author laments that he had neither such an acquaintance nor interest with Mr. Longueville, as to procure from him the golden remains of Butler there mentioned. He was, probably, led into the mistake by a note in the Biog. Brit. p. 1077, signifying, that the son of this gentleman was living in 1736.

Of this friend and generous patron of Butler, Mr. William Longueville, I find an account, written by a person who was well acquainted with him, to this effect, viz. that he was a conveyancing lawyer, and a bencher of the inner temple, and had raised himself from a low beginning, to very great eminence in that profession; that he was eloquent and learned, of spotless integrity; that he supported an aged father, who had ruined his fortunes by extravagance, and by his industry and application, reedi-

from whose care he removed, for a short time, to Cambridge; but, for want of money, was never made a member of any college. Wood leaves us rather doubtful whether he went to Cambridge or Oxford; but, at last, makes him pass six or seven years at Cambridge, without knowing in what hall or college; yet it can hardly be imagined that he lived so long in either university but as belonging to one house or another; and it is still less likely that he could have so long inhabited a place of learning with so little distinction as to leave his residence uncertain. Dr. Nash has discovered that his father was owner of a house and a little land, worth about eight pounds a year, still called Butler's tenement.

Wood has his information from his brother, whose narrative placed him at Cambridge, in opposition to that of his neighbours, which sent him to Oxford. The brother's seems the best authority, till, by confessing his inability to tell his hall or college, he gives reason to suspect that he was resolved to bestow on him an academical education; but durst not name a college, for fear of detection.

He was, for some time, according to the author of his life, clerk to Mr. Jefferys, of Earl's Croomb, in Worcestershire, an eminent justice of the peace. In his service he had not only leisure for study, but

fied a ruined family; that he supported Butler, who, but for him, must literally have starved; and received from him, as a recompense, the papers called his Remains. Life of the lordkeeper Guildford, p. 289. These have since been given to the public by Mr. Thyer, of Manchester: and the originals are now in the hands of the Rev. Dr. Farmer, master of Emanuel college, Cambridge. H.

for recreation: his amusements were musick and painting; and the reward of his pencil was the friendship of the celebrated Cooper. Some pictures, said to be his, were shown to Dr. Nash, at Earl's Croomb; but, when he inquired for them some years afterwards, he found them destroyed, to stop windows, and owns that they hardly deserved a better fate.

He was afterwards admitted into the family of the countess of Kent, where he had the use of a library; and so much recommended himself to Selden, that he was often employed by him in literary business. Selden, as is well known, was steward to the countess, and is supposed to have gained much of his wealth by managing her estate.

In what character Butler was admitted into that lady's service, how long he continued in it, and why he left it, is, like the other incidents of his life, utterly unknown.

The vicissitudes of his condition placed him afterwards in the family of sir Samuel Luke, one of Cromwell's officers. Here he observed so much of the character of the sectaries, that he is said to have written or begun his poem at this time; and it is likely that such a design would be formed in a place where he saw the principles and practices of the rebels, audacious and undisguised in the confidence of success.

At length the king returned, and the time came in which loyalty hoped for its reward. Butler, however, was only made secretary to the earl of Carbury, president of the principality of Wales; who

conferred on him the stewardship of Ludlow castle, when the court of the marches was revived.

In this part of his life, he married Mrs. Herbert, a gentlewoman of a good family; and lived, says Wood, upon her fortune, having studied the common law, but never practised it. A fortune she had, says his biographer, but it was lost by bad securities.

In 1663 was published the first part, containing three cantos, of the poem of Hudibras, which, as Prior relates, was made known at court by the taste and influence of the earl of Dorset. When it was known, it was necessarily admired: the king quoted, the courtiers studied, and the whole party of the royalists applauded it. Every eye watched for the golden shower which was to fall upon the author, who certainly was not without his part in the general expectation.

In 1664 the second part appeared; the curiosity of the nation was rekindled, and the writer was again praised and elated. But praise was his whole reward. Clarendon, says Wood, gave him reason to hope for "places and employments of value and credit;" but no such advantages did he ever obtain. It is reported that the king once gave him three hundred guineas; but of this temporary bounty I find no proof.

Wood relates that he was secretary to Villiers, duke of Buckingham, when he was chancellor of Cambridge: this is doubted by the other writer, who yet allows the duke to have been his frequent bene-

factor. That both these accounts are false there is reason to suspect, from a story told by Packe, in his account of the life of Wycherley; and from some verses which Mr. Thyer has published in the author's Remains.

"Mr. Wycherley," says Packe, "had always laid hold of an opportunity which offered of representing to the duke of Buckingham how well Mr. Butler had deserved of the royal family, by writing his inimitable Hudibras; and that it was a reproach to the court, that a person of his loyalty and wit should suffer in obscurity, and under the wants he did. The duke always seemed to hearken to him with attention enough; and, after some time, undertook to recommend his pretensions to his majesty. Mr. Wycherley, in hopes to keep him steady to his word, obtained of his grace to name a day, when he might introduce that modest and unfortunate poet to his new patron. At last an appointment was made, and the place of meeting was agreed to be the Roebuck. Mr. Butler and his friend attended accordingly; the duke joined them; but, as the d—l would have it, the door of the room where they sat was open, and his grace, who had seated himself near it, observed a pimp of his acquaintance (the creature too was a knight) trip by with a brace of ladies, immediately quitted his engagement to follow another kind of business, at which he was more ready than in doing good offices to men of desert, though no one was better qualified than he, both in regard to his fortune and understanding, to protect them; and,

from that time to the day of his death, poor Butler never found the least effect of his promise!''

Such is the story. The verses are written with a degree of acrimony, such as neglect and disappointment might naturally excite; and such as it would be hard to imagine Butler capable of expressing against a man who had any claim to his gratitude.

Nothwithstanding this discouragement and neglect, he still prosecuted his design; and, in 1678, published the third part, which still leaves the poem imperfect and abrupt. How much more he originally intended, or with what events the action was to be concluded, it is vain to conjecture. Nor can it be thought strange that he should stop here, however unexpectedly. To write without reward is sufficiently unpleasing. He had now arrived at an age when he might think it proper to be in jest no longer, and, perhaps, his health might now begin to fail.

He died in 1680; and Mr. Longueville, having unsuccessfully solicited a subscription for his interment in Westminster Abbey, buried him, at his own cost, in the church-yard of Covent garden[p]. Dr. Simon Patrick read the service.

Granger was informed by Dr. Pearce, who named for his authority Mr. Lowndes, of the treasury, that Butler had a yearly pension of an hundred pounds. This is contradicted by all tradition, by the com-

[p] In a note in the Biographia Britannica, p. 1075, he is said, on the authority of the younger Mr. Longueville, to have lived for some years in Rose street, Covent garden, and also that he died there; the latter of these particulars is rendered highly probable, by his being interred in the cemetery of that parish.

plaints of Oldham, and by the reproaches of Dryden; and, I am afraid, will never be confirmed.

About sixty years afterwards, Mr. Barber, a printer, mayor of London, and a friend to Butler's principles, bestowed on him a monument in Westminster Abbey, thus inscribed:

M. S.
SAMUELIS BUTLERI,
Qui Strenshamiæ in agro Vigorn. nat. 1612,
obijt Lond. 1680.
Vir doctus imprimis, acer, integer;
Operibus ingenii, non item præmiis, fœlix:
Satyrici apud nos carminis artifex egregius;
Quo simulatæ religionis larvam detraxit,
Et perduellium scelera liberrime exagitavit;
Scriptorum in suo genere, primus et postremus.
Ne, cui vivo deerant fere omnia,
Deesset etiam mortuo tumulus,
Hoc tandem posito marmore, curavit
JOHANNES BARBER, Civis Londinensis, 1721.

After his death were published three small volumes of his posthumous works; I know not by whom collected, or by what authority ascertained[q]; and, lately, two volumes more have been printed by Mr. Thyer, of Manchester, indubitably genuine. From none of these pieces can his life be traced, or his character discovered. Some verses, in the last collection, show him to have been among those who ridiculed the institution of the Royal Society, of which the enemies were, for some time, very numerous and very acrimonious; for what reason it is hard to conceive, since the philosophers professed not to advance doctrines, but to produce facts: and the

[q] They were collected into one, and published in 12mo. 1732. H.

most zealous enemy of innovation must admit the gradual progress of experience, however he may oppose hypothetical temerity.

In this mist of obscurity passed the life of Butler, a man whose name can only perish with his language. The mode and place of his education are unknown; the events of his life are variously related; and all that can be told with certainty is, that he was poor.

The poem of Hudibras is one of those compositions of which a nation may justly boast; as the images which it exhibits are domestick, the sentiments unborrowed and unexpected, and the strain of diction original and peculiar. We must not, however, suffer the pride, which we assume as the countrymen of Butler, to make any encroachment upon justice, nor appropriate those honours which others have a right to share. The poem of Hudibras is not wholly English; the original idea is to be found in the history of Don Quixote; a book to which a mind of the greatest powers may be indebted without disgrace.

Cervantes shows a man, who having, by the incessant perusal of incredible tales, subjected his understanding to his imagination, and familiarized his mind by pertinacious meditation to trains of incredible events, and scenes of impossible existence; goes out, in the pride of knighthood, to redress wrongs, and defend virgins, to rescue captive princesses, and tumble usurpers from their thrones; attended by a squire, whose cunning, too low for the suspicion of

a generous mind, enables him often to cheat his master.

The hero of Butler is a presbyterian justice, who, in the confidence of legal authority and the rage of zealous ignorance, ranges the country to repress superstition, and correct abuses, accompanied by an independent clerk, disputatious and obstinate, with whom he often debates, but never conquers him.

Cervantes had so much kindness for Don Quixote, that, however he embarrasses him with absurd distresses, he gives him so much sense and virtue as may preserve our esteem; wherever he is, or whatever he does, he is made, by matchless dexterity, commonly ridiculous, but never contemptible.

But for poor Hudibras, his poet had no tenderness; he chooses not that any pity should be shown, or respect paid him; he gives him up at once to laughter and contempt, without any quality that can dignify or protect him.

In forming the character of Hudibras, and describing his person and habiliments, the author seems to labour with a tumultuous confusion of dissimilar ideas. He had read the history of the mock knights-errant; he knew the notions and manners of a presbyterian magistrate, and tried to unite the absurdities of both, however distant, in one personage. Thus he gives him that pedantick ostentation of knowledge which has no relation to chivalry, and loads him with martial encumbrances that can add nothing to his civil dignity. He sends him out a "colonelling," and yet never brings him within sight of war.

If Hudibras be considered as the representative of the presbyterians, it is not easy to say why his weapons should be represented as ridiculous or useless; for, whatever judgment might be passed upon their knowledge or their arguments, experience had sufficiently shown that their swords were not to be despised.

The hero, thus compounded of swaggerer and pedant, of knight and justice, is led forth to action, with his squire Ralpho, an independent enthusiast.

Of the contexture of events planned by the author, which is called the action of the poem, since it is left imperfect, no judgment can be made. It is probable, that the hero was to be led through many luckless adventures, which would give occasion, like his attack upon the "bear and fiddle," to expose the ridiculous rigour of the sectaries; like his encounter with Sidrophel and Whacum, to make superstition and credulity contemptible; or, like his recourse to the low retailer of the law, discover the fraudulent practices of different professions.

What series of events he would have formed, or in what manner he would have rewarded or punished his hero, it is now vain to conjecture. His work must have had, as it seems, the defect which Dryden imputes to Spenser; the action could not have been one; there could only have been a succession of incidents, each of which might have happened without the rest, and which could not all cooperate to any single conclusion.

The discontinuity of the action might, however,

have been easily forgiven, if there had been action enough; but, I believe, every reader regrets the paucity of events, and complains that, in the poem of Hudibras, as in the history of Thucydides, there is more said than done. The scenes are too seldom changed, and the attention is tired with long conversation.

It is, indeed, much more easy to form dialogues than to contrive adventures. Every position makes way for an argument, and every objection dictates an answer. When two disputants are engaged upon a complicated and extensive question, the difficulty is not to continue, but to end the controversy. But whether it be that we comprehend but few of the possibilities of life, or that life itself affords little variety, every man, who has tried, knows how much labour it will cost to form such a combination of circumstances as shall have, at once, the grace of novelty and credibility, and delight fancy without violence to reason.

Perhaps the dialogue of this poem is not perfect. Some power of engaging the attention might have been added to it by quicker reciprocation, by seasonable interruptions, by sudden questions, and by a nearer approach to dramatick sprightliness; without which, fictitious speeches will always tire, however sparkling with sentences, and however variegated with allusions.

The great source of pleasure is variety. Uniformity must tire at last, though it be uniformity of excellence. We love to expect; and, when expectation is

disappointed or gratified, we want to be again expecting. For this impatience of the present, whoever would please must make provision. The skilful writer "irritat, mulcet," makes a due distribution of the still and animated parts. It is for want of this artful intertexture, and those necessary changes, that the whole of a book may be tedious, though all the parts are praised.

If inexhaustible wit could give perpetual pleasure, no eye would ever leave half-read the work of Butler; for what poet has ever brought so many remote images so happily together? It is scarcely possible to peruse a page without finding some association of images that was never found before. By the first paragraph the reader is amused, by the next he is delighted, and by a few more strained to astonishment; but astonishment is a toilsome pleasure; he is soon weary of wondering, and longs to be diverted:

> "Omnia vult belle Matho dicere, dic aliquando
> Et bene, dic neutrum, dic aliquando male."

Imagination is useless without knowledge: nature gives in vain the power of combination, unless study and observation supply materials to be combined. Butler's treasures of knowledge appear proportioned to his expense: whatever topick employs his mind, he shows himself qualified to expand and illustrate it with all the accessories that books can furnish: he is found not only to have travelled the beaten road, but the by-paths of literature; not only to have taken general surveys, but to have examined particulars with minute inspection.

If the French boast the learning of Rabelais, we need not be afraid of confronting them with Butler.

But the most valuable parts of his performance are those which retired study and native wit cannot supply. He that merely makes a book from books may be useful, but can scarcely be great. Butler had not suffered life to glide beside him unseen or unobserved. He had watched, with great diligence, the operations of human nature, and traced the effects of opinion, humour, interest, and passion. From such remarks proceeded that great number of sententious distichs, which have passed into conversation, and are added as proverbial axioms to the general stock of practical knowledge.

When any work has been viewed and admired, the first question of intelligent curiosity is, how was it performed? Hudibras was not a hasty effusion; it was not produced by a sudden tumult of imagination, or a short paroxysm of violent labour. To accumulate such a mass of sentiments at the call of accidental desire, or of sudden necessity, is beyond the reach and power of the most active and comprehensive mind. I am informed by Mr. Thyer, of Manchester, the excellent editor of this author's relicks, that he could show something like Hudibras in prose. He has in his possession the commonplace-book, in which Butler reposited, not such events or precepts as are gathered by reading, but such remarks, similitudes, allusions, assemblages, or inferences, as occasion prompted, or meditation produced; those thoughts that were generated in his

own mind, and might be usefully applied to some future purpose. Such is the labour of those who write for immortality.

But human works are not easily found without a perishable part. Of the ancient poets every reader feels the mythology tedious and oppressive. Of Hudibras, the manners, being founded on opinions, are temporary and local, and, therefore, become every day less intelligible, and less striking. What Cicero says of philosophy is true, likewise, of wit and humour, that "time effaces the fictions of opinion, and confirms the determinations of nature." Such manners as depend upon standing relations and general passions are coextended with the race of man; but those modifications of life, and peculiarities of practice, which are the progeny of errour and perverseness, or, at best, of some accidental influence or transient persuasion, must perish with their parents.

Much, therefore, of that humour which transported the last century[r] with merriment, is lost to us, who do not know the sour solemnity, the sullen superstition, the gloomy moroseness, and the stubborn scruples of the ancient puritans; or, if we know them, derive our information only from books, or from tradition, have never had them before our eyes, and cannot, but by recollection and study, understand the lines in which they are satirized. Our grandfathers knew the picture from the life; we judge of the life by contemplating the picture.

It is scarcely possible, in the regularity and com-

[r] The seventeenth. N.

posure of the present time, to image the tumult of absurdity, and clamour of contradiction, which perplexed doctrine, disordered practice, and disturbed both publick and private quiet, in that age when subordination was broken, and awe was hissed away; when any unsettled innovator, who could hatch a half-formed notion, produced it to the publick; when every man might become a preacher, and almost every preacher could collect a congregation.

The wisdom of the nation is very reasonably supposed to reside in the parliament. What can be concluded of the lower classes of the people, when in one of the parliaments, summoned by Cromwell, it was seriously proposed, that all the records in the Tower should be burnt, that all memory of things past should be effaced, and that the whole system of life should commence anew?

We have never been witnesses of animosities excited by the use of minced pies and plum porridge; nor seen with what abhorrence those, who could eat them at all other times of the year, would shrink from them in December. An old puritan who was alive in my childhood, being, at one of the feasts of the church, invited by a neighbour to partake his cheer, told him, that if he would treat him at an alehouse with beer brewed for all times and seasons he should accept his kindness, but would have none of his superstitious meats or drinks.

One of the puritanical tenets was the illegality of all games of chance; and he that reads Gataker upon Lots, may see how much learning and reason

one of the first scholars of his age thought necessary to prove, that it was no crime to throw a die, or play at cards, or to hide a shilling for the reckoning.

Astrology, however, against which so much of the satire is directed, was not more the folly of the puritans than of others. It had, in that time, a very extensive dominion. Its predictions raised hopes and fears in minds, which ought to have rejected it with contempt. In hazardous undertakings, care was taken to begin under the influence of a propitious planet; and, when the king was prisoner in Carisbrook castle, an astrologer was consulted what hour would be found most favourable to an escape.

What effect this poem had upon the publick, whether it shamed imposture, or reclaimed credulity, is not easily determined. Cheats can seldom stand long against laughter. It is certain, that the credit of planetary intelligence wore fast away; though some men of knowledge, and Dryden among them, continued to believe that conjunctions and oppositions had a great part in the distribution of good or evil, and in the goverment of sublunary things.

Poetical action ought to be probable upon certain suppositions, and such probability as burlesque requires is here violated only by one incident. Nothing can show more plainly the necessity of doing something, and the difficulty of finding something to do, than that Butler was reduced to transfer to his hero, the flagellation of Sancho, not the most agreeable fiction of Cervantes; very suitable, indeed, to the manners of that age and nation, which as-

cribed wonderful efficacy to voluntary penances; but so remote from the practice and opinions of the Hudibrastick time, that judgment and imagination are alike offended.

The diction of this poem is grossly familiar, and the numbers purposely neglected, except in a few places where the thoughts, by their native excellence, secure themselves from violation, being such as mean language cannot express. The mode of versification has been blamed by Dryden, who regrets that the heroick measure was not rather chosen. To the critical sentence of Dryden, the highest reverence would be due, were not his decisions often precipitate, and his opinions immature. When he wished to change the measure, he probably would have been willing to change more. If he intended that, when the numbers were heroick, the diction should still remain vulgar, he planned a very heterogeneous and unnatural composition. If he preferred a general stateliness both of sound and words, he can be only understood to wish that Butler had undertaken a different work.

The measure is quick, sprightly, and colloquial, suitable to the vulgarity of the words, and the levity of the sentiments. But such numbers and such diction can gain regard, only when they are used by a writer, whose vigour of fancy and copiousness of knowledge, entitle him to contempt of ornaments, and who, in confidence of the novelty and justness of his conceptions, can afford to throw metaphors and epithets away. To another that conveys common

thoughts in careless versification, it will only be said, "Pauper videri Cinna vult, et est pauper." The meaning and diction will be worthy of each other, and criticism may justly doom them to perish together.

Nor even though another Butler should arise, would another Hudibras obtain the same regard. Burlesque consists in a disproportion between the style and the sentiments, or between the adventitious sentiments and the fundamental subject. It, therefore, like all bodies compounded of heterogeneous parts, contains in it a principle of corruption. All disproportion is unnatural; and from what is unnatural, we can derive only the pleasure which novelty produces. We admire it awhile as a strange thing; but, when it is no longer strange, we perceive its deformity. It is a kind of artifice, which by frequent repetition detects itself; and the reader, learning in time what he is to expect, lays down his book, as the spectator turns away from a second exhibition of those tricks, of which the only use is to show that they can be played.

We extract from the second volume of Aubrey's Letters, p. 263, the following lines, entitled

*Hudibras unprinted.*

No jesuite ever took in hand,
To plant a church in barren land;
Or ever thought it worth his while
A Swede or Russe to reconcile.
For where there is not store of wealth,
Souls are not worth the chardge of health.
Spain and America had designes
To sell their gospell for their wines,
For had the Mexicans been poore,
No Spaniard twice had landed on their shore.
'Twas gold the catholick religion planted,
Which, had they wanted gold, they still had wanted. Ed.

# ROCHESTER

JOHN WILMOT, afterwards earl of Rochester, the son of Henry, earl of Rochester, better known by the title of lord Wilmot, so often mentioned in Clarendon's History, was born April 10, 1647, at Ditchley, in Oxfordshire. After a grammatical education at the school of Burford, he entered a nobleman into Wadham college in 1659, only twelve years old; and, in 1661, at fourteen, was, with some other persons of high rank, made master of arts by lord Clarendon in person.

He travelled afterwards into France and Italy; and, at his return, devoted himself to the court. In 1665 he went to sea with Sandwich, and distinguished himself at Bergen by uncommon intrepidity; and the next summer served again on board sir Edward Spragg, who, in the heat of the engagement, having a message of reproof to send to one of his captains, could find no man ready to carry it but Wilmot, who, in an open boat, went and returned amidst the storm of shot.

But his reputation for bravery was not lasting: he was reproached with slinking away in street quarrels, and leaving his companions to shift, as they could, without him; and Sheffield, duke of Buckingham, has left a story of his refusal to fight him.

He had very early an inclination to intemperance, which he totally subdued in his travels; but, when he became a courtier, he unhappily addicted himself to dissolute and vitious company, by which his

principles were corrupted, and his manners depraved. He lost all sense of religious restraint; and, finding it not convenient to admit the authority of laws, which he was resolved not to obey, sheltered his wickedness behind infidelity.

As he excelled in that noisy and licentious merriment which wine incites, his companions eagerly encouraged him in excess, and he willingly indulged it; till, as he confessed to Dr. Burnet, he was for five years together continually drunk, or so much inflamed by frequent ebriety, as in no interval to be master of himself.

In this state he played many frolicks, which it is not for his honour that we should remember, and which are not now distinctly known. He often pursued low amours in mean disguises, and always acted with great exactness and dexterity the characters which he assumed.

He once erected a stage on Tower hill, and harangued the populace as a mountebank; and, having made physick part of his study, is said to have practised it successfully.

He was so much in favour with king Charles, that he was made one of the gentlemen of the bedchamber, and comptroller of Woodstock park.

Having an active and inquisitive mind, he never, except in his paroxysms of intemperance, was wholly negligent of study: he read what is considered as polite learning so much, that he is mentioned by Wood as the greatest scholar of all the nobility. Sometimes he retired into the country, and amused

himself with writing libels, in which he did not pretend to confine himself to truth.

His favourite author in French was Boileau, and in English Cowley.

Thus in a course of drunken gaiety, and gross sensuality, with intervals of study, perhaps, yet more criminal, with an avowed contempt of all decency and order, a total disregard of every moral, and a resolute denial of every religious obligation, he lived worthless and useless, and blazed out his youth and his health in lavish voluptuousness, till, at the age of one-and-thirty, he had exhausted the fund of life, and reduced himself to a state of weakness and decay.

At this time he was led to an acquaintance with Dr. Burnet, to whom he laid open, with great freedom, the tenour of his opinions, and the course of his life, and from whom he received such conviction of the reasonableness of moral duty, and the truth of christianity, as produced a total change both of his manners and opinions. The account of those salutary conferences is given by Burnet in a book entitled, Some Passages of the Life and Death of John, Earl of Rochester, which the critick ought to read for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and the saint for its piety. It were an injury to the reader to offer him an abridgment.

He died July 26, 1680, before he had completed his thirty-fourth year; and was so worn away by a long illness, that life went out without a struggle.

Lord Rochester was eminent for the vigour of his colloquial wit, and remarkable for many wild pranks

and sallies of extravagance. The glare of his general character diffused itself upon his writings; the compositions of a man whose name was heard so often, were certain of attention, and from many readers certain of applause. This blaze of reputation is not yet quite extinguished; and his poetry still retains some splendour beyond that which genius has bestowed.

Wood and Burnet give us reason to believe, that much was imputed to him which he did not write. I know not by whom the original collection was made, or by what authority its genuineness was ascertained. The first edition was published in the year of his death, with an air of concealment, professing, in the titlepage, to be printed at Antwerp.

Of some of the pieces, however, there is no doubt: the Imitation of Horace's Satire, the Verses to lord Mulgrave, Satire against Man, the Verses upon Nothing, and, perhaps, some others, are, I believe, genuine; and, perhaps, most of those which the late collection exhibits[s].

As he cannot be supposed to have found leisure for any course of continued study, his pieces are commonly short, such as one fit of resolution would produce.

His songs have no particular character; they tell, like other songs, in smooth and easy language, of

[s] Dr. Johnson has made no mention of Valentinian, altered from Beaumont and Fletcher, which was published after his death by a friend, who describes him in the preface, not only as being one of the greatest geniuses, but one of the most virtuous men that ever existed. J. B.

scorn and kindness, dismission and desertion, absence and inconstancy, with the commonplaces of artificial courtship. They are commonly smooth and easy; but have little nature, and little sentiment.

His Imitation of Horace on Lucilius is not inelegant or unhappy. In the reign of Charles the second began that adaptation, which has since been very frequent, of ancient poetry to present times; and, perhaps, few will be found where the parallelism is better preserved than in this. The versification is, indeed, sometimes careless, but it is sometimes vigorous and weighty.

The strongest effort of his muse is his poem upon Nothing. He is not the first who has chosen this barren topick for the boast of his fertility. There is a poem called Nihil in Latin, by Passerat, a poet and critick of the sixteenth century, in France; who, in his own epitaph, expresses his zeal for good poetry thus:

Molliter ossa quiescent
Sint modo carminibus non onerata malis.

His works are not common, and, therefore, I shall subjoin his verses.

In examining this performance, Nothing must be considered as having not only a negative, but a kind of positive signification; as I need not fear thieves, I have *nothing*, and *nothing* is a very powerful protector. In the first part of the sentence it is taken negatively; in the second it is taken positively, as an agent. In one of Boileau's lines it was a question, whether he should use "à rien faire," or "à ne rien

faire;" and the first was preferred, because it gave "rien" a sense in some sort positive. *Nothing* can be a subject only in its positive sense, and such a sense is given it in the first line:

> *Nothing*, thou elder brother ev'n to shade.

In this line, I know not whether he does not allude to a curious book, De Umbra, by Wowerus, which, having told the qualities of *shade*, concludes with a poem, in which are these lines:

> Jam primum terram validis circumspice claustris
> Suspensam totam, decus admirabile mundi,
> Terrasque, tractusque maris, camposque liquentes
> Aeris, et vasti laqueata palatia cœli——
> Omnibus UMBRA prior.

The positive sense is generally preserved, with great skill, through the whole poem; though, sometimes, in a subordinate sense, the negative *nothing* is injudiciously mingled. Passerat confounds the two senses.

Another of his most vigorous pieces is his lampoon on sir Car Scroop, who, in a poem called the Praise of Satire, had some lines like these[t]:

> He who can push into a midnight fray
> His brave companion, and then run away,
> Leaving him to be murder'd in the street,
> Then put it off with some buffoon conceit;
> Him, thus dishonour'd, for a wit you own,
> And court him as top fiddler of the town.

This was meant of Rochester, whose "buffoon conceit" was, I suppose, a saying often mentioned, that "every man would be a coward, if he durst;"

[t] I quote from memory. Dr. J.

and drew from him those furious verses; to which Scroop made, in reply, an epigram, ending with these lines:

> Thou canst hurt no man's fame with thy ill word;
> Thy pen is full as harmless as thy sword.

Of the Satire against Man, Rochester can only claim what remains, when all Boileau's part is taken away.

In all his works there is sprightliness and vigour, and every where may be found tokens of a mind, which study might have carried to excellence. What more can be expected from a life spent in ostentatious contempt of regularity, and ended, before the abilities of many other men began to be displayed[u] !

## Poema Cl. V. Joannis Passeratii,
## Regii in Academia Parisiensi Professoris
## Ad ornatissimum virum Erricum Memmium

> Janus adest, festæ poscunt sua dona kalendæ,
> Munus abest festis quod possim offerre kalendis:
> Siccine Castalius nobis exaruit humor?
> Usque adeo ingenii nostri est exhausta facultas,
> Immunem ut videat redeuntis janitor anni?
> Quod nusquam est, potius nova per vestigia quæram.
> Ecce autem, partes dum sese versat in omnes,
> Invenit mea musa NIHIL; ne despice munus:
> Nam NIHIL est gemmis, NIHIL est pretiosius auro.
> Huc animum, huc, igitur, vultus adverte benignos:
> Res nova narratur quæ nulli audita priorum;
> Ausonii et Graii dixerunt cætera vates,
> Ausoniæ indictum NIHIL est, græcæque, Camœnæ.

[u] The late George Steevens, esq. made the selection of Rochester's poems which appears in Dr. Johnson's edition; but Mr. Malone observes, that the same task had been performed, in the early part of the last century, by Jacob Tonson. C.

E cœlo quacunque Ceres sua prospicit arva,
Aut genitor liquidis orbem complectitur ulnis
Oceanus, NIHIL interitus et originis expers.
Immortale NIHIL, NIHIL omni parte beatum.
Quod si hinc majestas et vis divina probatur,
Num quid honore deûm, num quid dignabimur aris?
Conspectu lucis NIHIL est jucundius almæ,
Vere NIHIL, NIHIL irriguo formosius horto,
Floridius pratis, Zephyri clementius aura;
In bello sanctum NIHIL est, Martisque tumultu:
Justum in pace NIHIL, NIHIL est in fœdere tutum.
Felix cui NIHIL est, (fuerant hæc vota Tibullo)
Non timet insidias; fures, incendia temnit;
Sollicitas sequitur nullo sub judice lites.
Ille ipse invictis qui subjicit omnia fatis,
Zenonis sapiens, NIHIL admiratur et optat.
Socraticique gregis fuit ista scientia quondam,
Scire NIHIL, studio cui nunc incumbitur uni.
Nec quicquam in ludo mavult didicisse juventus,
Ad magnas quia ducit opes, et culmen honorum.
Nosce NIHIL, nosces fertur quod Pythagoreæ
Grano hærere fabæ, cui vox adjuncta negantis.
Multi, Mercurio freti duce, viscera terræ
Pura liquefaciunt simul, et patrimonia miscent,
Arcano instantes operi, et carbonibus atris,
Qui tandem exhausti damnis, fractique labore,
Inveniunt, atque inventum NIHIL usque requirunt.
Hoc dimetiri non ulla decempeda possit:
Nec numeret Libycæ numerum qui callet arenæ.
Et Phœbo ignotum NIHIL est, NIHIL altius astris:
Tuque, tibi licet eximium sit mentis acumen,
Omnem in naturam penetrans, et in abdita rerum,
Pace tua, Memmi, NIHIL ignorare videris.
Sole tamen NIHIL est, et puro clarius igne.
Tange NIHIL, dicesque NIHIL sine corpore tangi.
Cerne NIHIL, cerni dices NIHIL absque colore.
Surdum audit loquiturque NIHIL sine voce, volatque
Absque ope pennarum, et graditur sine cruribus ullis.
Absque loco motuque NIHIL per inane vagatur.
Humano generi utilius NIHIL arte medendi;
Ne rhombos igitur, neu Thessala murmura tentet
Idalia vacuum trajectus arundine pectus,
Neu legat Idæo Dictæum in vertice gramen.

Vulneribus sævi NIHIL auxiliatur amoris.
Vexerit et quemvis trans mœstas portitor undas,
Ad superos imo NIHIL hunc revocabit ab orco.
Inferni NIHIL inflectit præcordia regis,
Parcarumque colos, et inexorabile pensum.
Obruta Phlegræis campis Titania pubes
Fulmineo sensit NIHIL esse potentius ictu.
Porrigitur magni NIHIL extra mœnia mundi.
Diique NIHIL metuunt. Quid longo carmine plura
Commemorem? Virtute NIHIL præstantius ipsa,
Splendidius NIHIL est. NIHIL est Jove denique majus.
Sed tempus finem argutis imponere nugis:
Ne tibi si multa laudem mea carmina charta,
De NIHILO NIHILI pariant fastidia versus.

# ROSCOMMON

WENTWORTH DILLON, earl of Roscommon, was the son of James Dillon and Elizabeth Wentworth, sister to the earl of Strafford. He was born in Ireland[v], during the lieutenancy of Strafford, who, being both his uncle and his godfather, gave him his own surname. His father, the third earl of Roscommon, had been converted by Usher to the protestant religion[w]; and when the popish rebellion broke out, Strafford, thinking the family in great danger from the fury of the Irish, sent for his godson, and placed him at his own seat in Yorkshire, where he was instructed in Latin; which he learned so as to write it with purity and elegance, though he was never able to retain the rules of grammar.

Such is the account given by Mr. Fenton, from whose notes on Waller most of this account must be borrowed, though I know not whether all that he relates is certain. The instructer whom he assigns to Roscommon is one Dr. Hall, by whom he cannot mean the famous Hall, then an old man and a bishop.

When the storm broke out upon Strafford, his house was a shelter no longer; and Dillon, by the advice of Usher, was sent to Caen, where the prot-

[v] The Biographia Britannica says, probably about the year 1632; but this is inconsistent with the date of Strafford's viceroyalty in the following page. C.

[w] It was his grandfather, sir Robert Dillon, second earl of Roscommon, who was converted from popery; and his conversion is recited in the patent of sir James, the first earl of Roscommon, as one of the grounds of his creation. M.

estants had then an university, and continued his studies under Bochart.

Young Dillon, who was sent to study under Bochart, and who is represented as having already made great proficiency in literature, could not be more than nine years old. Strafford went to govern Ireland in 1633, and was put to death eight years afterwards. That he was sent to Caen, is certain: that he was a great scholar, may be doubted.

At Caen he is said to have had some preternatural intelligence of his father's death.

"The lord Roscommon, being a boy of ten years of age, at Caen in Normandy, one day was, as it were, madly extravagant in playing, leaping, getting over the tables, boards, &c. He was wont to be sober enough; they said, God grant this bodes no ill luck to him! In the heat of this extravagant fit, he cries out, 'My father is dead.' A fortnight after, news came from Ireland that his father was dead. This account I had from Mr. Knolles, who was his governor, and then with him,—since secretary to the earl of Strafford; and I have heard his lordship's relations confirm the same." Aubrey's Miscellany.

The present age is very little inclined to favour any accounts of this kind, nor will the name of Aubrey much recommend it to credit: it ought not, however, to be omitted, because better evidence of a fact cannot easily be found, than is here offered; and it must be by preserving such relations that we may, at last, judge how much they are to be regarded. If we stay to examine this account, we shall

see difficulties on both sides: here is the relation of a fact given by a man who had no interest to deceive, and who could not be deceived himself; and here is, on the other hand, a miracle which produces no effect; the order of nature is interrupted to discover not a future, but only a distant event, the knowledge of which is of no use to him to whom it is revealed. Between these difficulties, what way shall be found? Is reason or testimony to be rejected? I believe, what Osborne says of an appearance of sanctity may be applied to such impulses or anticipations as this: "Do not wholly slight them, because they may be true; but do not easily trust them, because they may be false."

The state both of England and Ireland was, at this time, such, that he who was absent from either country had very little temptation to return; and, therefore, Roscommon, when he left Caen, travelled into Italy, and amused himself with its antiquities, and, particularly, with medals, in which he acquired uncommon skill.

At the restoration, with the other friends of monarchy, he came to England, was made captain of the band of pensioners, and learned so much of the dissoluteness of the court, that he addicted himself immoderately to gaming, by which he was engaged in frequent quarrels, and which, undoubtedly, brought upon him its usual concomitants, extravagance and distress.

After some time, a dispute about part of his estate forced him into Ireland, where he was made, by the

duke of Ormond, captain of the guards, and met with an adventure thus related by Fenton:

"He was at Dublin, as much as ever, distempered with the same fatal affection for play, which engaged him in one adventure, that well deserves to be related. As he returned to his lodgings from a gaming-table, he was attacked, in the dark, by three ruffians, who were employed to assassinate him. The earl defended himself with so much resolution, that he despatched one of the aggressors; whilst a gentleman, accidentally passing that way, interposed, and disarmed another; the third secured himself by flight. This generous assistant was a disbanded officer, of a good family and fair reputation; who, by what we call the partiality of fortune, to avoid censuring the iniquities of the times, wanted even a plain suit of clothes to make a decent appearance at the castle. But his lordship, on this occasion, presenting him to the duke of Ormond, with great importunity prevailed with his grace, that he might resign his post of captain of the guards to his friend; which, for about three years, the gentleman enjoyed, and, upon his death, the duke returned the commission to his generous benefactor."

When he had finished his business, he returned to London; was made master of the horse to the dutchess of York; and married the lady Frances, daughter of the earl of Burlington, and widow of colonel Courteney[x].

[x] He was married to lady Frances Boyle in April, 1662. By this lady he had no issue. He married secondly, 10th November, 1674, Isabella, daughter of Matthew Boynton, of Barmston, in Yorkshire. M.

He now busied his mind with literary projects, and formed the plan of a society for refining our language and fixing its standard; "in imitation," says Fenton, "of those learned and polite societies with which he had been acquainted abroad." In this design his friend Dryden is said to have assisted him.

The same design, it is well known, was revived by Dr. Swift, in the ministry of Oxford; but it has never since been publickly mentioned, though, at that time, great expectations were formed, by some, of its establishment and its effects. Such a society might, perhaps, without much difficulty, be collected; but that it would produce what is expected from it, may be doubted.

The Italian academy seems to have obtained its end. The language was refined, and so fixed that it has changed but little. The French academy thought they had refined their language, and, doubtless, thought rightly; but the event has not shown that they fixed it; for the French of the present time is very different from that of the last century.

In this country an academy could be expected to do but little. If an academician's place were profitable, it would be given by interest; if attendance were gratuitous, it would be rarely paid, and no man would endure the least disgust. Unanimity is impossible, and debate would separate the assembly.

But suppose the philological decree made and promulgated, what would be its authority? In absolute governments, there is, sometimes, a general reverence paid to all that has the sanction of power,

and the countenance of greatness. How little this is the state of our country needs not to be told. We live in an age in which it is a kind of publick sport to refuse all respect that cannot be enforced. The edicts of an English academy would, probably, be read by many, only that they might be sure to disobey them.

That our language is in perpetual danger of corruption cannot be denied; but what prevention can be found? The present manners of the nation would deride authority; and, therefore, nothing is left but that every writer should criticise himself.

All hopes of new literary institutions were quickly suppressed by the contentious turbulence of king James's reign; and Roscommon, foreseeing that some violent concussion of the state was at hand, purposed to retire to Rome, alleging, that "it was best to sit near the chimney when the chamber smoked;" a sentence, of which the application seems not very clear.

His departure was delayed by the gout; and he was so impatient either of hinderance or of pain, that he submitted himself to a French empirick, who is said to have repelled the disease into his bowels.

At the moment in which he expired, he uttered, with an energy of voice, that expressed the most fervent devotion, two lines of his own version of Dies Iræ:

> My God, my father, and my friend,
> Do not forsake me in my end.

He died in 1684; and was buried, with great pomp, in Westminster Abbey.

His poetical character is given by Mr. Fenton: "In his writings," says Fenton, "we view the image of a mind which was naturally serious and solid; richly furnished and adorned with all the ornaments of learning, unaffectedly disposed in the most regular and elegant order. His imagination might have probably been more fruitful and sprightly, if his judgment had been less severe. But that severity, delivered in a masculine, clear, succinct style, contributed to make him so eminent in the didactical manner, that no man, with justice, can affirm, he was ever equalled by any of our nation, without confessing, at the same time, that he is inferiour to none. In some other kinds of writing his genius seems to have wanted fire to attain the point of perfection; but who can attain it?"

From this account of the riches of his mind, who would not imagine that they had been displayed in large volumes and numerous performances? Who would not, after the perusal of this character, be surprised to find that all the proofs of this genius, and knowledge, and judgment, are not sufficient to form a single book, or to appear otherwise than in conjunction with the works of some other writer of the same petty size[y]! But thus it is that characters are

[y] They were published, together with those of Duke, in an octavo volume, in 1717. The editor, whoever he was, professes to have taken great care to procure and insert all of his lordship's poems that are truly genuine. The truth of this assertion is flatly denied by the author of an

written: we know somewhat, and we imagine the rest. The observation, that his imagination would, probably, have been more fruitful and sprightly, if his judgment had been less severe, may be answered, by a remarker somewhat inclined to cavil, by a contrary supposition, that his judgment would, probably, have been less severe, if his imagination had been more fruitful. It is ridiculous to oppose judgment to imagination; for it does not appear that men have necessarily less of one, as they have more of the other.

We must allow of Roscommon, what Fenton has not mentioned so distinctly as he ought, and what is yet very much to his honour, that he is, perhaps, the only correct writer in verse, before Addison; and that, if there are not so many or so great beauties in his compositions as in those of some contemporaries, there are, at least, fewer faults. Nor is this his highest praise; for Mr. Pope has celebrated him, as the only moral writer of king Charles's reign:

> Unhappy Dryden! in all Charles's days,
> Roscommon only boasts unspotted lays.

His great work is his Essay on Translated Verse; of which Dryden writes thus, in the preface to his Miscellanies:

"It was my lord Roscommon's Essay on Translated Verse," says Dryden, "which made me un-

account of Mr. John Pomfret, prefixed to his Remains; who asserts, that the Prospect of Death was written by that person, many years after lord Roscommon's decease; as also, that the paraphrase of the Prayer of Jeremy was written by a gentleman of the name of Southcourt, living in the year 1724. H.

easy, till I tried whether or no I was capable of following his rules, and of reducing the speculation into practice. For many a fair precept in poetry is like a seeming demonstration in mathematicks, very specious in the diagram, but failing in the mechanick operation. I think I have generally observed his instructions: I am sure my reason is sufficiently convinced both of their truth and usefulness; which, in other words, is to confess no less a vanity than to pretend that I have, at least, in some places, made examples to his rules."

This declaration of Dryden will, I am afraid, be found little more than one of those cursory civilities which one author pays to another; for when the sum of lord Roscommon's precepts is collected, it will not be easy to discover how they can qualify their reader for a better performance of translation than might have been attained by his own reflections.

He that can abstract his mind from the elegance of the poetry, and confine it to the sense of the precepts, will find no other direction than that the author should be suitable to the translator's genius; that he should be such as may deserve a translation; that he who intends to translate him should endeavour to understand him; that perspicuity should be studied, and unusual and uncouth names sparingly inserted; and that the style of the original should be copied in its elevation and depression. These are the rules that are celebrated as so definite and important; and for the delivery of which to mankind so much honour has been paid. Roscom-

mon has, indeed, deserved his praises, had they been given with discernment, and bestowed not on the rules themselves, but the art with which they are introduced, and the decorations with which they are adorned.

The essay, though generally excellent, is not without its faults. The story of the quack, borrowed from Boileau, was not worth the importation; he has confounded the British and Saxon mythology:

> I grant that from some mossy idol oak,
> In double rhymes, our Thor and Woden spoke.

The oak, as, I think, Gildon has observed, belonged to the British druids, and Thor and Woden were Saxon deities. Of the "double rhymes," which he so liberally supposes, he certainly had no knowledge.

His interposition of a long paragraph of blank verses is unwarrantably licentious. Latin poets might as well have introduced a series of iambicks among their heroicks.

His next work is the translation of the Art of Poetry; which has received, in my opinion, not less praise than it deserves. Blank verse, left merely to its numbers, has little operation either on the ear or mind: it can hardly support itself without bold figures and striking images. A poem, frigidly didactick, without rhyme, is so near to prose, that the reader only scorns it for pretending to be verse.

Having disentangled himself from the difficulties of rhyme, he may justly be expected to give the sense of Horace with great exactness, and to suppress

no subtilty of sentiment, for the difficulty of expressing it. This demand, however, his translation will not satisfy; what he found obscure, I do not know that he has ever cleared.

Among his smaller works, the eclogue of Virgil and the Dies Iræ are well translated; though the best line in the Dies Iræ is borrowed from Dryden. In return, succeeding poets have borrowed from Roscommon.

In the verses on the Lap-dog, the pronouns *thou* and *you* are offensively confounded; and the turn at the end is from Waller.

His versions of the two odes of Horace are made with great liberty, which is not recompensed by much elegance or vigour.

His political verses are sprightly, and, when they were written, must have been very popular.

Of the scene of Guarini, and the prologue to Pompey, Mrs. Phillips, in her letters to sir Charles Cotterel, has given the history.

"Lord Roscommon," says she, "is certainly one of the most promising young noblemen in Ireland. He has paraphrased a psalm admirably; and a scene of Pastor Fido, very finely, in some places much better than sir Richard Fanshaw. This was undertaken merely in compliment to me, who happened to say, that it was the best scene in Italian, and the worst in English. He was only two hours about it." It begins thus:

> Dear happy groves, and you, the dark retreat
> Of silent horrour, Rest's eternal seat.

From these lines, which are since somewhat mended, it appears that he did not think a work of two hours fit to endure the eye of criticism, without revisal.

When Mrs. Phillips was in Ireland, some ladies that had seen her translation of Pompey, resolved to bring it on the stage at Dublin; and, to promote their design, lord Roscommon gave them a prologue, and sir Edward Deering, an epilogue; "which," says she, "are the best performances of those kinds I ever saw." If this is not criticism, it is, at least, gratitude. The thought of bringing Cæsar and Pompey into Ireland, the only country over which Cæsar never had any power, is lucky.

Of Roscommon's works, the judgment of the publick seems to be right. He is elegant, but not great; he never labours after exquisite beauties, and he seldom falls into gross faults. His versification is smooth, but rarely vigorous; and his rhymes are remarkably exact. He improved taste, if he did not enlarge knowledge, and may be numbered among the benefactors to English literature[z].

[z] This life was originally written by Dr. Johnson, in the Gentleman's Magazine for May, 1748. It then had notes, which are now incorporated with the text. C.

# OTWAY

OF Thomas Otway, one of the first names in the English drama, little is known; nor is there any part of that little which his biographer can take pleasure in relating.

He was born at Trottin, in Sussex, March 3, 1651, the son of Mr. Humphry Otway, rector of Woolbeding. From Winchester school, where he was educated, he was entered, in 1669, a commoner of Christ church; but left the university without a degree, whether for want of money, or from impatience of academical restraint, or mere eagerness to mingle with the world, is not known.

It seems likely that he was in hope of being busy and conspicuous; for he went to London, and commenced player; but found himself unable to gain any reputation on the stage[a].

This kind of inability he shared with Shakespeare and Jonson, as he shared likewise some of their excellencies. It seems reasonable to expect that a great dramatick poet should, without difficulty, become a great actor; that he who can feel, should express; that he who can excite passion, should exhibit, with great readiness, its external modes: but since experience has fully proved, that of those powers, whatever be their affinity, one may be possessed in a great degree by him who has very little of the other; it

[a] In Roscius Anglicanus, by Downes, the prompter, p. 34, we learn, that it was the character of the king in Mrs. Behn's Forced Marriage, or the Jealous Bridegroom, which Mr. Otway attempted to perform, and failed in. This event appears to have happened in the year 1672. R.

must be allowed that they depend upon different faculties, or on different use of the same faculty; that the actor must have a pliancy of mien, a flexibility of countenance, and a variety of tones, which the poet may be easily supposed to want; or that the attention of the poet and the player has been differently employed; the one has been considering thought, and the other action; one has watched the heart, and the other contemplated the face.

Though he could not gain much notice as a player, he felt in himself such powers as might qualify for a dramatick author; and, in 1675, his twenty-fifth year, produced Alcibiades, a tragedy; whether from the Alcibiade of Palaprat, I have not means to inquire. Langbaine, the great detecter of plagiarism, is silent.

In 1677, he published Titus and Berenice, translated from Rapin, with the Cheats of Scapin, from Molière; and, in 1678, Friendship in Fashion, a comedy, which, whatever might be its first reception, was, upon its revival at Drury lane, in 1749, hissed off the stage for immorality and obscenity.

Want of morals, or of decency, did not, in those days, exclude any man from the company of the wealthy and the gay, if he brought with him any powers of entertainment; and Otway is said to have been, at this time, a favourite companion of the dissolute wits. But, as he who desires no virtue in his companion, has no virtue in himself, those whom Otway frequented had no purpose of doing more for him than to pay his reckoning. They desired

only to drink and laugh: their fondness was without benevolence, and their familiarity without friendship. "Men of wit," says one of Otway's biographers, "received, at that time, no favour from the great, but to share their riots; from which they were dismissed again to their own narrow circumstances. Thus they languished in poverty, without the support of eminence."

Some exception, however, must be made. The earl of Plymouth, one of king Charles's natural sons, procured for him a cornet's commission in some troops then sent into Flanders. But Otway did not prosper in his military character; for he soon left his commission behind him, whatever was the reason, and came back to London in extreme indigence, which Rochester mentions with merciless insolence, in the Session of the Poets:

> Tom Otway came next, Tom Shadwell's dear zany,
> And swears for heroicks he writes best of any;
> Don Carlos his pockets so amply had fill'd,
> That his mange was quite cur'd, and his lice were all kill'd:
> But Apollo had seen his face on the stage,
> And prudently did not think fit to engage
> The scum of a playhouse, for the prop of an age.

Don Carlos, from which he is represented as having received so much benefit, was played in 1675. It appears, by the lampoon, to have had great success, and is said to have been played thirty nights together. This, however, it is reasonable to doubt[b],

[b] This doubt is, indeed, very reasonable. I know not where it is said that Don Carlos was acted thirty nights together. Wherever it is said, it is untrue. Downes, who is perfectly good authority on this point, informs us, that it was performed ten days successively. M.

as so long a continuance of one play upon the stage is a very wide deviation from the practice of that time; when the ardour for theatrical entertainments was not yet diffused through the whole people, and the audience, consisting nearly of the same persons, could be drawn together only by variety.

The Orphan was exhibited in 1680. This is one of the few plays that keep possession of the stage, and has pleased for almost a century, through all the vicissitudes of dramatick fashion. Of this play nothing new can easily be said. It is a domestick tragedy drawn from middle life. Its whole power is upon the affections; for it is not written with much comprehension of thought, or elegance of expression. But if the heart is interested, many other beauties may be wanting, yet not be missed.

The same year produced the History and Fall of Caius Marius; much of which is borrowed from the Romeo and Juliet of Shakespeare.

In 1683[c] was published the first, and next year[d] the second, parts of the Soldier's Fortune, two comedies now forgotten; and, in 1685[e], his last and greatest dramatick work, Venice Preserved, a tragedy, which still continues to be one of the favourites of the publick, notwithstanding the want of morality in the original design, and the despicable scenes of vile comedy with which he has diversified his tragick action[f]. By comparing this with his

[c] 1681. [d] 1684. [e] 1682.

[f] The "despicable scenes of vile comedy" can be no bar to its being a favourite of the publick, as they are always omitted in the representation. J. B.

Orphan, it will appear that his images were by time become stronger, and his language more energetick. The striking passages are in every mouth; and the publick seems to judge rightly of the faults and excellencies of this play, that it is the work of a man not attentive to decency, nor zealous for virtue; but of one who conceived forcibly, and drew originally, by consulting nature in his own breast.

Together with those plays he wrote the poems which are in the present collection, and translated from the French the History of the Triumvirate.

All this was performed before he was thirty-four years old; for he died April 14, 1685, in a manner which I am unwilling to mention. Having been compelled by his necessities to contract debts, and hunted, as is supposed, by the terriers of the law, he retired to a publick house on Tower hill, where he is said to have died of want; or, as it is related by one of his biographers, by swallowing, after a long fast, a piece of bread which charity had supplied. He went out, as is reported, almost naked, in the rage of hunger, and, finding a gentleman in a neighbouring coffee-house, asked him for a shilling. The gentleman gave him a guinea; and Otway, going away, bought a roll, and was choked with the first mouthful. All this, I hope, is not true; and there is this ground of better hope, that Pope, who lived near enough to be well informed, relates in Spence's Memorials, that he died of a fever, caught by violent pursuit of a thief that had robbed one of his friends. But that indigence, and its concomitants,

sorrow and despondency, pressed hard upon him, has never been denied, whatever immediate cause might bring him to the grave.

Of the poems which the present collection admits, the longest is the Poet's Complaint of his Muse, part of which I do not understand; and in that which is less obscure, I find little to commend. The language is often gross, and the numbers are harsh. Otway had not much cultivated versification, nor much replenished his mind with general knowledge. His principal power was in moving the passions, to which Dryden[g], in his latter years, left an illustrious testimony. He appears, by some of his verses, to have been a zealous royalist, and had what was in those times the common reward of loyalty; he lived and died neglected.

[g] In his preface to Fresnoy's Art of Painting. Dr. J.

# WALLER

EDMUND WALLER was born on the third of March, 1605, at Coleshill in Hertfordshire. His father was Robert Waller, esq. of Agmondesham, in Buckinghamshire, whose family was originally a branch of the Kentish Wallers; and his mother was the daughter of John Hampden, of Hampden in the same county, and sister to Hampden, the zealot of rebellion.

His father died while he was yet an infant, but left him a yearly income of three thousand five hundred pounds; which, rating together the value of money and the customs of life, we may reckon more than equivalent to ten thousand at the present time.

He was educated, by the care of his mother, at Eton; and removed afterwards to King's college, in Cambridge. He was sent to parliament in his eighteenth, if not in his sixteenth year, and frequented the court of James the first, where he heard a very remarkable conversation, which the writer of the life prefixed to his works, who seems to have been well informed of facts, though he may sometimes err in chronology, has delivered as indubitably certain:

"He found Dr. Andrews, bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Neale, bishop of Durham, standing behind his majesty's chair; and there happened something extraordinary," continues this writer, "in the conversation those prelates had with the king, on which Mr. Waller did often reflect. His majesty asked the bishops: 'My lords, cannot I take my subjects'

money, when I want it, without all this formality of parliament?' The bishop of Durham readily answered, 'God forbid, sir, but you should: you are the breath of our nostrils.' Whereupon the king turned and said to the bishop of Winchester, 'Well, my lord, what say you?' 'Sir,' replied the bishop, 'I have no skill to judge of parliamentary cases.' The king answered, 'No put-offs, my lord; answer me presently.' 'Then, sir,' said he, 'I think it is lawful for you to take my brother Neale's money; for he offers it.' Mr. Waller said, the company was pleased with this answer, and the wit of it seemed to affect the king; for, a certain lord coming in soon after, his majesty cried out, 'Oh, my lord, they say you lig with my lady.' 'No, sir,' says his lordship, in confusion; 'but I like her company, because she has so much wit.' 'Why then,' says the king, 'do you not lig with my lord of Winchester there?' "

Waller's political and poetical life began nearly together. In his eighteenth year he wrote the poem that appears first in his works, on the Prince's Escape at St. Andero; a piece which justifies the observation, made by one of his editors, that he attained, by a felicity like instinct, a style which, perhaps, will never be obsolete; and that, "were we to judge only by the wording, we could not know what was wrote at twenty, and what at fourscore." His versification was, in his first essay, such as it appears in his last performance. By the perusal of Fairfax's translation of Tasso, to which, as Dryden relates[h],

[h] Preface to his Fables. Dr. J.

he confessed himself indebted for the smoothness of his numbers, and by his own nicety of observation, he had already formed such a system of metrical harmony, as he never afterwards much needed, or much endeavoured, to improve. Denham corrected his numbers by experience, and gained ground gradually upon the ruggedness of his age; but what was acquired by Denham was inherited by Waller.

The next poem, of which the subject seems to fix the time, is supposed, by Mr. Fenton, to be the Address to the Queen, which he considers as congratulating her arrival, in Waller's twentieth year. He is apparently mistaken; for the mention of the nation's obligations to her frequent pregnancy, proves that it was written, when she had brought many children. We have, therefore, no date of any other poetical production before that which the murder of the duke of Buckingham occasioned: the steadiness with which the king received the news in the chapel, deserved, indeed, to be rescued from oblivion.

Neither of these pieces, that seem to carry their own dates, could have been the sudden effusion of fancy. In the verses on the prince's escape, the prediction of his marriage with the princess of France must have been written after the event; in the other, the promises of the king's kindness to the descendants of Buckingham, which could not be properly praised, till it had appeared by its effects, show that time was taken for revision and improvement. It is not known that they were published till they appeared, long afterwards, with other poems.

Waller was not one of those idolaters of praise who cultivate their minds at the expense of their fortunes. Rich as he was by inheritance, he took care early to grow richer, by marrying Mrs. Banks, a great heiress in the city, whom the interest of the court was employed to obtain for Mr. Crofts. Having brought him a son, who died young, and a daughter, who was afterwards married to Mr. Dormer, of Oxfordshire, she died in childbed, and left him a widower of about five-and-twenty, gay and wealthy, to please himself with another marriage.

Being too young to resist beauty, and probably too vain to think himself resistible, he fixed his heart, perhaps half fondly and half ambitiously, upon the lady Dorothea Sidney, eldest daughter of the earl of Leicester, whom he courted by all the poetry in which Sacharissa is celebrated; the name is derived from the Latin appellation of sugar, and implies, if it means any thing, a spiritless mildness, and dull good-nature, such as excites rather tenderness than esteem, and such as, though always treated with kindness, is never honoured or admired.

Yet he describes Sacharissa as a sublime predominating beauty, of lofty charms, and imperious influence, on whom he looks with amazement rather than fondness, whose chains he wishes, though in vain, to break, and whose presence is "wine that inflames to madness."

His acquaintance with this high-born dame gave wit no opportunity of boasting its influence; she was not to be subdued by the powers of verse, but

rejected his addresses, it is said, with disdain, and drove him away to solace his disappointment with Amoret or Phillis. She married, in 1639, the earl of Sunderland, who died at Newbury, in the king's cause; and, in her old age, meeting somewhere with Waller, asked him, when he would again write such verses upon her; "when you are as young, madam," said he, "and as handsome, as you were then."

In this part of his life it was that he was known to Clarendon, among the rest of the men who were eminent in that age for genius and literature; but known so little to his advantage, that they who read his character will not much condemn Sacharissa, that she did not descend from her rank to his embraces, nor think every excellence comprised in wit.

The lady was, indeed, inexorable; but his uncommon qualifications, though they had no power upon her, recommended him to the scholars and statesmen; and, undoubtedly, many beauties of that time, however they might receive his love, were proud of his praises. Who they were, whom he dignifies with poetical names, cannot now be known. Amoret, according to Mr. Fenton, was the lady Sophia Murray. Perhaps, by traditions, preserved in families, more may be discovered.

From the verses written at Penshurst, it has been collected that he diverted his disappointment by a voyage; and his biographers, from his poem on the Whales, think it not improbable that he visited the Bermudas; but it seems much more likely, that he should amuse himself with forming an imaginary

scene, than that so important an incident, as a visit to America, should have been left floating in conjectural probability.

From his twenty-eighth to his thirty-fifth year, he wrote his pieces on the reduction of Sallee; on the reparation of St. Paul's; to the King on his Navy; the panegyrick on the Queen Mother; the two poems to the earl of Northumberland; and perhaps others, of which the time cannot be discovered.

When he had lost all hopes of Sacharissa, he looked round him for an easier conquest, and gained a lady of the family of Bresse, or Breaux. The time of his marriage is not exactly known. It has not been discovered that this wife was won by his poetry; nor is any thing told of her, but that she brought him many children. He, doubtless, praised some whom he would have been afraid to marry, and, perhaps, married one whom he would have been ashamed to praise. Many qualities contribute to domestick happiness, upon which poetry has no colours to bestow; and many airs and sallies may delight imagination, which he who flatters them never can approve. There are charms made only for distant admiration. No spectacle is nobler than a blaze.

Of this wife, his biographers have recorded that she gave him five sons and eight daughters.

During the long interval of parliament, he is represented as living among those with whom it was most honourable to converse, and enjoying an exuberant fortune with that independence and liberty of speech and conduct which wealth ought always

to produce. He was, however, considered as the kinsman of Hampden, and was, therefore, supposed by the courtiers not to favour them.

When the parliament was called in 1640, it appeared that Waller's political character had not been mistaken. The king's demand of a supply produced one of those noisy speeches which disaffection and discontent regularly dictate; a speech filled with hyperbolical complaints of imaginary grievances: "They," says he, "who think themselves already undone, can never apprehend themselves in danger; and they who have nothing left can never give freely." Political truth is equally in danger from the praises of courtiers, and the exclamations of patriots.

He then proceeds to rail at the clergy, being sure, at that time, of a favourable audience. His topick is such as will always serve its purpose; an accusation of acting and preaching only for preferment; and he exhorts the commons "carefully to provide *for their* protection against pulpit law."

It always gratifies curiosity to trace a sentiment. Waller has, in this speech, quoted Hooker in one passage; and in another has copied him, without quoting. "Religion," says Waller, "ought to be the first thing in our purpose and desires; but that which is first in dignity is not always to precede in order of time; for well-being supposes a being; and the first impediment which men naturally endeavour to remove, is the want of those things without which they cannot subsist. God first assigned unto Adam

maintenance of life, and gave him a title to the rest of the creatures, before he appointed a law to observe."

"God first assigned Adam," says Hooker, "maintenance of life, and then appointed him a law to observe. True it is, that the kingdom of God must be the first thing in our purpose and desires; but, inasmuch as a righteous life presupposeth life, inasmuch as to live virtuously it is impossible, except we live; therefore the first impediment which naturally we endeavour to remove is penury, and want of things without which we cannot live." Book i. Sect. 9.

The speech is vehement; but the great position, that grievances ought to be redressed, before supplies are granted, is agreeable enough to law and reason: nor was Waller, if his biographer may be credited, such an enemy to the king, as not to wish his distresses lightened; for he relates, "that the king sent particularly to Waller, to second his demand of some subsidies to pay off the army; and sir Henry Vane objecting against first voting a supply, because the king would not accept, unless it came up to his proportion, Mr. Waller spoke earnestly to sir Thomas Jermyn, comptroller of the household, to save his master from the effects of so bold a falsity; 'for' he said, 'I am but a country gentleman, and cannot pretend to know the king's mind:' but sir Thomas durst not contradict the secretary; and his son, the earl of St. Alban's, afterwards told Mr. Waller, that his father's cowardice ruined the king."

In the long parliament, which, unhappily for the nation, met Nov. 3, 1640, Waller represented Agmondesham the third time; and was considered, by the discontented party, as a man sufficiently trusty and acrimonious to be employed in managing the prosecution of judge Crawley, for his opinion in favour of ship-money; and his speech shows that he did not disappoint their expectations. He was, probably, the more ardent, as his uncle Hampden had been particularly engaged in the dispute, and, by a sentence, which seems generally to be thought unconstitutional, particularly injured.

He was not, however, a bigot to his party, nor adopted all their opinions. When the great question, whether episcopacy ought to be abolished, was debated, he spoke against the innovation so coolly, so reasonably, and so firmly, that it is not without great injury to his name that his speech, which was as follows, has been hitherto omitted in his works[1]:

"There is no doubt but the sense of what this nation hath suffered from the present bishops hath produced these complaints; and the apprehensions men have of suffering the like, in time to come, make so many desire the taking away of episcopacy: but I conceive it is possible that we may not, now, take a right measure of the minds of the people by their petitions; for, when they subscribed them, the bishops were armed with a dangerous commission of making new canons, imposing new oaths, and the

[1] This speech has been retrieved, from a paper printed at that time, by the writers of the Parliamentary History. Dr. J.

like; but now we have disarmed them of that power. These petitioners lately did look upon episcopacy, as a beast armed with horns and claws; but now that we have cut and pared them (and may, if we see cause, yet reduce it into narrower bounds,) it may, perhaps, be more agreeable. Howsoever, if they be still in passion, it becomes us soberly to consider the right use and antiquity thereof; and not to comply further with a general desire, than may stand with a general good.

"We have already showed, that episcopacy, and the evils thereof, are mingled like water and oil; we have also, in part, severed them; but, I believe, you will find, that our laws and the present government of the church are mingled like wine and water; so inseparable, that the abrogation of, at least, a hundred of our laws is desired in these petitions. I have often heard a noble answer of the lords, commended in this house, to a proposition of like nature, but of less consequence; they gave no other reason of their refusal but this, 'Nolumus mutare leges Angliæ:' it was the bishops who so answered then; and it would become the dignity and wisdom of this house to answer the people now with a 'Nolumus mutare.'

"I see some are moved with a number of hands against the bishops; which, I confess, rather inclines me to their defence; for I look upon episcopacy as a counterscarp, or outwork; which, if it be taken by this assault of the people, and, withal, this mystery once revealed, 'That we must deny them nothing, when they ask it thus in troops,' we may, in the next

place, have as hard a task to defend our property, as we have lately had to recover it from the prerogative. If, by multiplying hands and petitions, they prevail for an equality in things ecclesiastical, the next demand, perhaps, may be 'Lex Agraria,' the like equality in things temporal.

"The Roman story tells us, that when the people began to flock about the senate, and were more curious to direct and know what was done, than to obey, that commonwealth soon came to ruin; their 'Legem rogare' grew quickly to be a 'Legem ferre;' and after, when their legions had found that they could make a dictator, they never suffered the senate to have a voice any more in such election.

"If these great innovations proceed, I shall expect a flat and level in learning too, as well as in church-preferments; 'Honos alit artes.' And though it be true, that grave and pious men do study for learning-sake, and embrace virtue for itself; yet it is as true that youth, which is the season when learning is gotten, is not without ambition, nor will ever take pains to excel in any thing, when there is not some hope of excelling others in reward and dignity.

"There are two reasons chiefly alleged against our church-government.

"First, Scripture, which, as some men think, points out another form.

"Second, The abuses of the present superiours.

"For scripture, I will not dispute it in this place; but I am confident that, whenever an equal division of lands and goods shall be desired, there will be as

many places in scripture found out, which seem to favour that, as there are now alleged against the prelacy or preferment in the church. And, as for abuses, where you are now in the remonstrance told what this and that poor man hath suffered by the bishops, you may be presented with a thousand instances of poor men that have received hard measure from their landlords; and of worldly goods abused, to the injury of others, and disadvantage of the owners.

"'And, therefore, Mr. Speaker, my humble motion is, that we may settle men's minds herein; and, by a question, declare our resolution, 'to reform,' that is, 'not to abolish, episcopacy.'"

It cannot but be wished that he, who could speak in this manner, had been able to act with spirit and uniformity.

When the commons began to set the royal authority at open defiance, Waller is said to have withdrawn from the house, and to have returned with the king's permission; and, when the king set up his standard, he sent him a thousand broad-pieces. He continued, however, to sit in the rebellious conventicle; but "spoke," says Clarendon, "with great sharpness and freedom, which, now there was no danger of being outvoted, was not restrained; and, therefore, used as an argument against those who were gone, upon pretence that they were not suffered to deliver their opinion freely in the house, which could not be believed, when all men knew what liberty Mr. Waller took, and spoke every day

with impunity against the sense and proceedings of the house."

Waller, as he continued to sit, was one of the commissioners nominated by the parliament to treat with the king at Oxford; and, when they were presented, the king said to him, "Though you are the last, you are not the lowest, nor the least in my favour." Whitlock, who, being another of the commissioners, was witness of this kindness, imputes it to the king's knowledge of the plot, in which Waller appeared afterwards to have been engaged against the parliament. Fenton, with equal probability, believes that his attempt to promote the royal cause arose from his sensibility of the king's tenderness. Whitlock says nothing of his behaviour at Oxford: he was sent with several others to add pomp to the commission, but was not one of those to whom the trust of treating was imparted.

The engagement, known by the name of Waller's plot, was soon afterwards discovered. Waller had a brother-in-law, Tomkyns, who was clerk of the queen's council, and, at the same time, had a very numerous acquaintance, and great influence, in the city. Waller and he, conversing with great confidence, told both their own secrets and those of their friends; and, surveying the wide extent of their conversation, imagined that they found, in the majority of all ranks, great disapprobation of the violence of the commons, and unwillingness to continue the war. They knew that many favoured the king, whose fear concealed their loyalty; and many desired peace,

though they durst not oppose the clamour for war; and they imagined that, if those who had these good intentions could be informed of their own strength, and enabled by intelligence to act together, they might overpower the fury of sedition, by refusing to comply with the ordinance for the twentieth part, and the other taxes levied for the support of the rebel army, and by uniting great numbers in a petition for peace. They proceeded with great caution. Three only met in one place, and no man was allowed to impart the plot to more than two others; so that, if any should be suspected or seized, more than three could not be endangered.

Lord Conway joined in the design, and, Clarendon imagines, incidentally mingled, as he was a soldier, some martial hopes or projects, which, however, were only mentioned, the main design being to bring the loyal inhabitants to the knowledge of each other; for which purpose there was to be appointed one in every district, to distinguish the friends of the king, the adherents to the parliament, and the neutrals. How far they proceeded does not appear; the result of their inquiry, as Pym declared[j], was, that within the walls, for one that was for the royalists, there were three against them; but that without the walls, for one that was against them, there were five for them. Whether this was said from knowledge or guess, was, perhaps, never inquired.

It is the opinion of Clarendon, that in Waller's plan no violence or sanguinary resistance was com-

[j] Parliamentary History, vol. xii. Dr. J.

prised; that he intended only to abate the confidence of the rebels by publick declarations, and to weaken their powers by an opposition to new supplies. This, in calmer times, and more than this, is done without fear; but such was the acrimony of the commons, that no method of obstructing them was safe.

About this time, another design was formed by sir Nicholas Crispe, a man of loyalty that deserves perpetual remembrance: when he was a merchant in the city, he gave and procured the king, in his exigencies, a hundred thousand pounds; and, when he was driven from the exchange, raised a regiment, and commanded it.

Sir Nicholas flattered himself with an opinion, that some provocation would so much exasperate, or some opportunity so much encourage, the king's friends in the city, that they would break out in open resistance, and then would want only a lawful standard, and an authorized commander; and extorted from the king, whose judgment too frequently yielded to importunity, a commission of array, directed to such as he thought proper to nominate, which was sent to London by the lady Aubigney. She knew not what she carried, but was to deliver it on the communication of a certain token, which sir Nicholas imparted.

This commission could be only intended to lie ready, till the time should require it. To have attempted to raise any forces, would have been certain destruction; it could be of use only when the forces should appear. This was, however, an act

preparatory to martial hostility. Crispe would, undoubtedly, have put an end to the session of parliament, had his strength been equal to his zeal: and out of the design of Crispe, which involved very little danger, and that of Waller, which was an act purely civil, they compounded a horrid and dreadful plot.

The discovery of Waller's design is variously related. In Clarendon's History, it is told, that a servant of Tomkyns, lurking behind the hangings, when his master was in conference with Waller, heard enough to qualify him for an informer, and carried his intelligence to Pym. A manuscript, quoted in the Life of Waller, relates, that "he was betrayed by his sister Price, and her presbyterian chaplain, Mr. Goode, who stole some of his papers; and, if he had not strangely dreamed the night before, that his sister had betrayed him, and, thereupon, burnt the rest of his papers, by the fire that was in his chimney, he had certainly lost his life by it." The question cannot be decided. It is not unreasonable to believe, that the men in power, receiving intelligence from the sister, would employ the servant of Tomkyns to listen at the conference, that they might avoid an act so offensive as that of destroying the brother by the sister's testimony.

The plot was published in the most terrifick manner. On the 31st of May, 1643, at a solemn fast, when they were listening to the sermon, a messenger entered the church, and communicated his errand to Pym, who whispered it to others that were

placed near him, and then went with them out of the church, leaving the rest in solicitude and amazement. They immediately sent guards to proper places, and, that night, apprehended Tomkyns and Waller; having yet traced nothing but that letters had been intercepted, from which it appeared that the parliament and the city were soon to be delivered into the hands of the cavaliers.

They, perhaps, yet knew little themselves, beyond some general and indistinct notices. "But Waller," says Clarendon, "was so confounded with fear, that he confessed whatever he had heard, said, thought, or seen; all that he knew of himself, and all that he suspected of others, without concealing any person of what degree or quality soever, or any discourse which he had ever upon any occasion entertained with them; what such and such ladies of great honour, to whom, upon the credit of his wit and great reputation, he had been admitted, had spoke to him in their chambers upon the proceedings in the houses, and how they had encouraged him to oppose them; what correspondence and intercourse they had with some ministers of state at Oxford, and how they had conveyed all intelligence thither." He accused the earl of Portland, and lord Conway, as cooperating in the transaction; and testified, that the earl of Northumberland had declared himself disposed in favour of any attempt, that might check the violence of the parliament, and reconcile them to the king.

He, undoubtedly, confessed much which they

could never have discovered, and, perhaps, somewhat which they would wish to have been suppressed; for it is inconvenient, in the conflict of factions, to have that disaffection known which cannot safely be punished.

Tomkyns was seized on the same night with Waller, and appears, likewise, to have partaken of his cowardice; for he gave notice of Crispe's commission of array, of which Clarendon never knew how it was discovered. Tomkyns had been sent with the token appointed, to demand it from lady Aubigney, and had buried it in his garden, where, by his direction, it was dug up; and thus the rebels obtained, what Clarendon confesses them to have had, the original copy.

It can raise no wonder that they formed one plot out of these two designs, however remote from each other, when they saw the same agent employed in both, and found the commission of array in the hands of him, who was employed in collecting the opinions and affections of the people.

Of the plot, thus combined, they took care to make the most. They sent Pym among the citizens, to tell them of their imminent danger, and happy escape; and inform them, that the design was, "to seize the lord mayor, and all the committee of militia, and would not spare one of them." They drew up a vow and covenant, to be taken by every member of either house, by which he declared his detestation of all conspiracies against the parliament, and his resolution to detect and oppose them. They

then appointed a day of thanksgiving for this wonderful delivery; which shut out, says Clarendon, all doubts whether there had been such a deliverance, and whether the plot was real or fictitious.

On June 11, the earl of Portland and lord Conway were committed, one to the custody of the mayor, and the other of the sheriff; but their lands and goods were not seized.

Waller was still to immerse himself deeper in ignominy. The earl of Portland and lord Conway denied the charge; and there was no evidence against them but the confession of Waller, of which, undoubtedly, many would be inclined to question the veracity. With these doubts he was so much terrified, that he endeavoured to persuade Portland to a declaration like his own, by a letter extant in Fenton's edition. "But for me," says he, "you had never known any thing of this business, which was prepared for another; and, therefore, I cannot imagine why you should hide it so far as to contract your own ruin by concealing it, and persisting unreasonably to hide that truth, which without you already is, and will every day be made more manifest. Can you imagine yourself bound in honour to keep that secret, which is already revealed by another? or possible it should still be a secret, which is known to one of the other sex? If you persist to be cruel to yourself, for their sakes who deserve it not, it will, nevertheless, be made appear, ere long, I fear, to your ruin. Surely, if I had the happiness to wait on you, I could move you to compassionate

both yourself and me, who, desperate as my case is, am desirous to die with the honour of being known to have declared the truth. You have no reason to contend to hide what is already revealed — inconsiderately to throw away yourself, for the interest of others, to whom you are less obliged than you are aware of."

This persuasion seems to have had little effect. Portland sent, June 29, a letter to the lords, to tell them, that he "is in custody, as he conceives, without any charge; and that, by what Mr. Waller hath threatened him with, since he was imprisoned, he doth apprehend a very cruel, long, and ruinous restraint:—He, therefore, prays, that he may not find the effects of Mr. Waller's threats, by a long and close imprisonment; but may be speedily brought to a legal trial, and then he is confident the vanity and falsehood of those informations which have been given against him will appear."

In consequence of this letter, the lords ordered Portland and Waller to be confronted; when the one repeated his charge, and the other his denial. The examination of the plot being continued, July 1, Thinn, usher of the house of lords, deposed, that Mr. Waller having had a conference with the lord Portland in an upper room, lord Portland said, when he came down, "do me the favour to tell my lord Northumberland, that Mr. Waller has extremely pressed me to save my own life and his, by throwing the blame upon the lord Conway and the earl of Northumberland."

Waller, in his letter to Portland, tells him of the reasons which he could urge with resistless efficacy in a personal conference; but he overrated his own oratory; his vehemence, whether of persuasion or entreaty, was returned with contempt.

One of his arguments with Portland is, that the plot is already known to a woman. This woman was, doubtless, lady Aubigney, who, upon this occasion, was committed to custody; but who, in reality, when she delivered the commission, knew not what it was.

The parliament then proceeded against the conspirators, and committed their trial to a council of war. Tomkyns and Chaloner were hanged near their own doors. Tomkyns, when he came to die, said it was a "foolish business;" and, indeed, there seems to have been no hope that it should escape discovery; for, though never more than three met at a time, yet a design so extensive must, by necessity, be communicated to many, who could not be expected to be all faithful, and all prudent. Chaloner was attended at his execution by Hugh Peters. His crime was, that he had commission to raise money for the king; but it appears not that the money was to be expended upon the advancement of either Crispe's or Waller's plot.

The earl of Northumberland, being too great for prosecution, was only once examined before the lords. The earl of Portland and lord Conway, persisting to deny the charge, and no testimony, but Waller's, yet appearing against them, were, after a long imprisonment, admitted to bail. Hassel, the

king's messenger, who carried the letters to Oxford, died the night before his trial. Hampden escaped death, perhaps, by the interest of his family; but was kept in prison to the end of his life. They, whose names were inserted in the commission of array, were not capitally punished, as it could not be proved that they had consented to their own nomination; but they were considered as malignants, and their estates were seized.

"Waller, though confessedly," says Clarendon, "the most guilty, with incredible dissimulation, affected such a remorse of conscience, that his trial was put off, out of christian compassion, till he might recover his understanding." What use he made of this interval, with what liberality and success he distributed flattery and money, and how, when he was brought, July 4, before the house, he confessed and lamented, and submitted and implored, may be read in the History of the Rebellion, (b. vii.) The speed, to which Clarendon ascribes the preservation of his "dear-bought life," is inserted in his works. The great historian, however, seems to have been mistaken in relating that "he prevailed" in the principal part of his supplication, "not to be tried by a council of war;" for, according to Whitlock, he was, by expulsion from the house, abandoned to the tribunal which he so much dreaded, and, being tried and condemned, was reprieved by Essex; but, after a year's imprisonment, in which time resentment grew less acrimonious, paying a fine of ten thousand pounds, he

was permitted to "recollect himself in another country."

Of his behaviour in this part of his life, it is not necessary to direct the reader's opinion. "Let us not," says his last ingenious biographer[k], "condemn him with untempered severity, because he was not a prodigy which the world hath seldom seen, because his character included not the poet, the orator, and the hero."

For the place of his exile he chose France, and stayed some time at Roan, where his daughter Margaret was born, who was afterwards his favourite, and his amanuensis. He then removed to Paris, where he lived with great splendour and hospitality; and, from time to time, amused himself with poetry, in which he sometimes speaks of the rebels, and their usurpation, in the natural language of an honest man.

At last, it became necessary, for his support, to sell his wife's jewels; and being reduced, as he said, at last "to the rump-jewel," he solicited, from Cromwell, permission to return, and obtained it by the interest of colonel Scroop, to whom his sister was married. Upon the remains of a fortune which the danger of his life had very much diminished, he lived at Hall Barn, a house built by himself very near to Beaconsfield, where his mother resided. His mother, though related to Cromwell and Hampden, was zealous for the royal cause, and, when Cromwell visited her, used to reproach him; he, in return,

[k] Life of Waller prefixed to an edition of his works, published in 1773, by Percival Stockdale. C.

would throw a napkin at her, and say he would not dispute with his aunt; but finding, in time, that she acted for the king, as well as talked, he made her a prisoner to her own daughter, in her own house. If he would do any thing, he could not do less.

Cromwell, now protector, received Waller, as his kinsman, to familiar conversation. Waller, as he used to relate, found him sufficiently versed in ancient history; and when any of his enthusiastick friends came to advise or consult him, could, sometimes, overhear him discoursing in the cant of the times; but, when he returned, he would say: "Cousin Waller, I must talk to these men in their own way;" and resumed the common style of conversation.

He repaid the protector for his favours (1654) by the famous Panegyrick, which has been always considered as the first of his poetical productions. His choice of encomiastick topicks is very judicious; for he considers Cromwell in his exaltation, without inquiring how he attained it; there is, consequently, no mention of the rebel or the regicide. All the former part of his hero's life is veiled with shades; and nothing is brought to view but the chief, the governour, the defender of England's honour, and the enlarger of her dominion. The act of violence, by which he obtained the supreme power, is lightly treated, and decently justified. It was, certainly, to, be desired, that the detestable band should be dissolved, which had destroyed the church, murdered the king, and filled the nation with tumult and oppression; yet Cromwell had not the right of dissolv-

ing them, for all that he had before done could be justified only by supposing them invested with lawful authority. But combinations of wickedness would overwhelm the world, by the advantage which licentious principles afford, did not those, who have long practised perfidy, grow faithless to each other.

In the poem on the war with Spain are some passages, at least, equal to the best parts of the Panegyrick; and, in the conclusion, the poet ventures yet a higher flight of flattery, by recommending royalty to Cromwell and the nation. Cromwell was very desirous, as appears from his conversation, related by Whitlock, of adding the title to the power of monarchy, and is supposed to have been withheld from it partly by fear of the army, and partly by fear of the laws, which, when he should govern by the name of king, would have restrained his authority. When, therefore, a deputation was solemnly sent to invite him to the crown, he, after a long conference, refused it; but is said to have fainted in his coach, when he parted from them.

The poem on the death of the protector seems to have been dictated by real veneration for his memory. Dryden and Sprat wrote on the same occasion; but they were young men, struggling into notice, and hoping for some favour from the ruling party. Waller had little to expect; he had received nothing but his pardon from Cromwell, and was not likely to ask any thing from those who should succeed him.

Soon afterwards, the restoration supplied him with another subject; and he exerted his imagination,

his elegance, and his melody, with equal alacrity, for Charles the second. It is not possible to read, without some contempt and indignation, poems of the same author, ascribing the highest degree of "power and piety" to Charles the first, then transferring the same "power and piety" to Oliver Cromwell; now inviting Oliver to take the crown, and then congratulating Charles the second on his recovered right. Neither Cromwell nor Charles could value his testimony, as the effect of conviction, or receive his praises, as effusions of reverence; they could consider them but as the labour of invention, and the tribute of dependence.

Poets, indeed, profess fiction; but the legitimate end of fiction is the conveyance of truth; and he that has flattery ready for all whom the vicissitudes of the world happen to exalt, must be scorned, as a prostituted mind, that may retain the glitter of wit, but has lost the dignity of virtue.

The Congratulation was considered as inferiour in poetical merit to the Panegyrick; and it is reported, that, when the king told Waller of the disparity, he answered, "poets, sir, succeed better in fiction than in truth."

The Congratulation is, indeed, not inferiour to the Panegyrick, either by decay of genius, or for want of diligence; but because Cromwell had done much, and Charles had done little. Cromwell wanted nothing to raise him to heroick excellence but virtue; and virtue his poet thought himself at liberty to supply. Charles had yet only the merit of struggling with-

out success, and suffering without despair. A life of escapes and indigence could supply poetry with no splendid images.

In the first parliament, summoned by Charles the second, March 8, 1661, Waller sat for Hastings, in Sussex, and served for different places in all the parliaments of that reign. In a time when fancy and gaiety were the most powerful recommendations to regard, it is not likely that Waller was forgotten. He passed his time in the company that was highest both in rank and wit, from which even his obstinate sobriety did not exclude him. Though he drank water, he was enabled, by his fertility of mind, to heighten the mirth of Bacchanalian assemblies; and Mr. Saville said, that "no man in England should keep him company without drinking, but Ned Waller."

The praise given him by St. Evremond is a proof of his reputation; for it was only by his reputation that he could be known, as a writer, to a man who, though he lived a great part of a long life upon an English pension, never condescended to understand the language of the nation that maintained him.

In parliament, "he was," says Burnet, "the delight of the house, and, though old, said the liveliest things of any among them." This, however, is said in his account of the year seventy-five, when Waller was only seventy. His name, as a speaker, occurs often in Grey's Collections; but I have found no extracts that can be more quoted, as exhibiting sallies of gaiety than cogency of argument.

He was of such consideration, that his remarks were circulated and recorded. When the duke of York's influence was high, both in Scotland and England, it drew, says Burnet, a lively reflection from Waller, the celebrated wit. He said "the house of commons had resolved that the duke should not reign after the king's death; but the king, in opposition to them, had resolved that he should reign, even in his life." If there appear no extraordinary liveliness in this remark, yet its reception proves the speaker to have been a celebrated wit, to have had a name which the men of wit were proud of mentioning.

He did not suffer his reputation to die gradually away, which may easily happen in a long life, but renewed his claim to poetical distinction, from time to time, as occasions were offered, either by publick events or private incidents; and, contenting himself with the influence of his muse, or loving quiet better than influence, he never accepted any office of magistracy.

He was not, however, without some attention to his fortune; for he asked from the king, in 1665, the provostship of Eton college, and obtained it; but Clarendon refused to put the seal to the grant, alleging that it could be held only by a clergyman. It is known that sir Henry Wotton qualified himself for it by deacon's orders.

To this opposition the Biographia imputes the violence and acrimony with which Waller joined Buckingham's faction in the prosecution of Clarendon.

The motive was illiberal and dishonest, and showed that more than sixty years had not been able to teach him morality. His accusation is such as conscience can hardly be supposed to dictate, without the help of malice: "We were to be governed by janizaries, instead of parliaments, and are in danger from a worse plot than that of the fifth of November; then, if the lords and commons had been destroyed, there had been a succession; but here both had been destroyed for ever." This is the language of a man who is glad of an opportunity to rail, and ready to sacrifice truth to interest, at one time, and to anger, at another.

A year after the chancellor's banishment, another vacancy gave him encouragement for another petition, which the king referred to the council, who, after hearing the question argued by lawyers for three days, determined that the office could be held only by a clergyman, according to the act of uniformity, since the provosts had always received institution, as for a parsonage, from the bishops of Lincoln. The king then said, he could not break the law which he had made; and Dr. Zachary Cradock, famous for a single sermon, at most, for two sermons, was chosen by the fellows.

That he asked any thing else is not known; it is certain that he obtained nothing, though he continued obsequious to the court through the rest of Charles's reign.

At the accession of king James, in 1685, he was chosen for parliament, being then fourscore, at Saltash, in Cornwall; and wrote a Presage of the Down-

fal of the Turkish Empire, which he presented to the king, on his birthday. It is remarked, by his commentator, Fenton, that, in reading Tasso, he had early imbibed a veneration for the heroes of the holy war, and a zealous enmity to the Turks, which never left him. James, however, having soon after begun what he thought a holy war at home, made haste to put all molestation of the Turks out of his power.

James treated him with kindness and familiarity, of which instances are given by the writer of his life. One day, taking him into the closet, the king asked him how he liked one of the pictures: "My eyes," said Waller, "are dim, and I do not know it." The king said it was the princess of Orange. "She is," said Waller, "like the greatest woman in the world." The king asked who was that; and was answered, queen Elizabeth. "I wonder," said the king, "you should think so; but I must confess she had a wise council." "And, sir," said Waller, "did you ever know a fool choose a wise one?" Such is the story, which I once heard of some other man. Pointed axioms, and acute replies, fly loose about the world, and are assigned, successively, to those whom it may be the fashion to celebrate.

When the king knew that he was about to marry his daughter to Dr. Birch, a clergyman, he ordered a French gentleman to tell him, that "the king wondered he could think of marrying his daughter to a falling church." "The king," said Waller, "does me great honour, in taking notice of my domestick affairs; but I have lived long enough

to observe that this falling church has got a trick of rising again."

He took notice to his friends of the king's conduct; and said that "he would be left like a whale upon the strand." Whether he was privy to any of the transactions which ended in the revolution, is not known. His heir joined the prince of Orange.

Having now attained an age beyond which the laws of nature seldom suffer life to be extended, otherwise than by a future state, he seems to have turned his mind upon preparation for the decisive hour, and, therefore, consecrated his poetry to devotion. It is pleasing to discover that his piety was without weakness; that his intellectual powers continued vigorous; and that the lines which he composed when "he, for age, could neither read nor write," are not inferiour to the effusions of his youth.

Towards the decline of life, he bought a small house, with a little land, at Coleshill; and said, "he should be glad to die, like the stag, where he was roused." This, however, did not happen. When he was at Beaconsfield, he found his legs grow tumid; he went to Windsor, where sir Charles Scarborough then attended the king, and requested him, as both a friend and a physician, to tell him, "What that swelling meant." "Sir," answered Scarborough, "your blood will run no longer." Waller repeated some lines of Virgil, and went home to die.

As the disease increased upon him, he composed himself for his departure; and, calling upon Dr. Birch to give him the holy sacrament, he desired his

children to take it with him, and made an earnest declaration of his faith in christianity. It now appeared what part of his conversation with the great could be remembered with delight. He related, that being present when the duke of Buckingham talked profanely before king Charles, he said to him, "My lord, I am a great deal older than your grace, and have, I believe, heard more arguments for atheism than ever your grace did; but I have lived long enough to see there is nothing in them; and so, I hope, your grace will."

He died October 21, 1687, and was buried at Beaconsfield, with a monument erected by his son's executors, for which Rymer wrote the inscription, and which, I hope, is now rescued from dilapidation.

He left several children by his second wife; of whom, his daughter was married to Dr. Birch. Benjamin, the eldest son, was disinherited, and sent to New Jersey, as wanting common understanding. Edmund, the second son, inherited the estate, and represented Agmondesham in parliament, but, at last, turned quaker. William, the third son, was a merchant in London. Stephen, the fourth, was an eminent doctor of laws, and one of the commissioners for the union. There is said to have been a fifth, of whom no account has descended.

The character of Waller, both moral and intellectual, has been drawn by Clarendon, to whom he was familiarly known, with nicety, which certainly none to whom he was not known can presume to emulate. It is, therefore, inserted here, with such remarks as

others have supplied; after which, nothing remains but a critical examination of his poetry.

"Edmund Waller," says Clarendon, "was born to a very fair estate, by the parsimony, or frugality, of a wise father and mother: and he thought it so commendable an advantage, that he resolved to improve it with his utmost care, upon which, in his nature, he was too much intent; and, in order to that, he was so much reserved and retired, that he was scarce ever heard of, till, by his address and dexterity, he had gotten a very rich wife in the city, against all the recommendation and countenance and authority of the court, which was thoroughly engaged on the behalf of Mr. Crofts, and which used to be successful, in that age, against any opposition. He had the good fortune to have an alliance and friendship with Dr. Morley, who had assisted and instructed him in the reading many good books, to which his natural parts and promptitude inclined him, especially the poets; and, at the age when other men used to give over writing verses, (for he was near thirty years when he first engaged himself in that exercise, at least that he was known to do so,) he surprised the town with two or three pieces of that kind; as if a tenth muse had been newly born to cherish drooping poetry. The doctor, at that time, brought him into that company which was most celebrated for good conversation; where he was received and esteemed with great applause and respect. He was a very pleasant discourser, in earnest and in jest, and, therefore, very grateful to all kind of com-

pany, where he was not the less esteemed for being very rich.

"He had been even nursed in parliaments, where he sat when he was very young; and so, when they were resumed again, (after a long intermission,) he appeared in those assemblies with great advantage; having a graceful way of speaking, and by thinking much on several arguments, (which his temper and complexion, that had much of melancholick, inclined him to,) he seemed often to speak upon the sudden, when the occasion had only administered the opportunity of saying what he had thoroughly considered, which gave a great lustre to all he said; which yet was rather of delight than weight. There needs no more be said to extol the excellence and power of his wit, and pleasantness of his conversation, than that it was of magnitude enough to cover a world of very great faults; that is, so to cover them, that they were not taken notice of to his reproach; viz. a narrowness in his nature to the lowest degree; an abjectness and want of courage to support him in any virtuous undertaking; an insinuation and servile flattery to the height, the vainest and most imperious nature could be contented with; that it preserved and won his life from those who were most resolved to take it, and in an occasion in which he ought to have been ambitious to have lost it; and then preserved him again from the reproach and contempt that was due to him for so preserving it, and for vindicating it at such a price; that it had power to reconcile him to those whom he had most offended

and provoked; and continued to his age with that rare felicity, that his company was acceptable where his spirit was odious; and he was, at least, pitied where he was most detested."

Such is the account of Clarendon; on which it may not be improper to make some remarks.

"He was very little known till he had obtained a rich wife in the city."

He obtained a rich wife about the age of three-and-twenty; an age before which few men are conspicuous much to their advantage. He was known, however, in parliament and at court; and, if he spent part of his time in privacy, it is not unreasonable to suppose, that he endeavoured the improvement of his mind, as well as of his fortune.

That Clarendon might misjudge the motive of his retirement is the more probable, because he has evidently mistaken the commencement of his poetry, which he supposes him not to have attempted before thirty. As his first pieces were, perhaps, not printed, the succession of his compositions was not known; and Clarendon, who cannot be imagined to have been very studious of poetry, did not rectify his first opinion by consulting Waller's book.

Clarendon observes, that he was introduced to the wits of the age by Dr. Morley; but the writer of his life relates that he was already among them, when, hearing a noise in the street, and inquiring the cause, they found a son of Ben Jonson under an arrest. This was Morley, whom Waller set free, at the expense of one hundred pounds, took him into the

country as directer of his studies, and then procured him admission into the company of the friends of literature. Of this fact Clarendon had a nearer knowledge than the biographer, and is, therefore, more to be credited.

The account of Waller's parliamentary eloquence is seconded by Burnet, who, though he calls him "the delight of the house," adds, that "he was only concerned to say that which should make him be applauded; he never laid the business of the house to heart, being a vain and empty, though a witty man."

Of his insinuation and flattery it is not unreasonable to believe that the truth is told. Ascham, in his elegant description of those whom, in modern language, we term wits, says, that they are "open flatterers, and privy mockers." Waller showed a little of both, when, upon sight of the dutchess of Newcastle's verses on the Death of a Stag, he declared that he would give all his own compositions to have written them; and, being charged with the exorbitance of his adulation, answered, that "nothing was too much to be given, that a lady might be saved from the disgrace of such a vile performance." This, however, was no very mischievous or very unusual deviation from truth: had his hypocrisy been confined to such transactions, he might have been forgiven, though not praised; for who forbears to flatter an author or a lady.

Of the laxity of his political principles, and the weakness of his resolution, he experienced the natural effect, by losing the esteem of every party. From

Cromwell he had only his recall; and from Charles the second, who delighted in his company, he obtained only the pardon of his relation Hampden, and the safety of Hampden's son.

As far as conjecture can be made from the whole of his writing, and his conduct, he was habitually and deliberately a friend to monarchy. His deviation towards democracy proceeded from his connexion with Hampden, for whose sake he prosecuted Crawley with great bitterness; and the invective which he pronounced on that occasion was so popular, that twenty thousand copies are said, by his biographer, to have been sold in one day.

It is confessed that his faults still left him many friends, at least many companions. His convivial power of pleasing is universally acknowledged; but those who conversed with him intimately, found him not only passionate, especially in his old age, but resentful; so that the interposition of friends was sometimes necessary.

His wit and his poetry naturally connected him with the polite writers of his time: he was joined with lord Buckhurst in the translation of Corneille's Pompey; and is said to have added his help to that of Cowley in the original draught of the Rehearsal.

The care of his fortune, which Clarendon imputes to him, in a degree little less than criminal, was either not constant or not successful; for, having inherited a patrimony of three thousand five hundred pounds a year in the time of James the first, and augmented it, at least, by one wealthy marriage, he

left, about the time of the revolution, an income of not more than twelve or thirteen hundred; which, when the different value of money is reckoned, will be found, perhaps, not more than a fourth part of what he once possessed.

Of this diminution, part was the consequence of the gifts which he was forced to scatter, and the fine which he was condemned to pay at the detection of his plot; and if his estate, as is related in his life, was sequestered, he had probably contracted debts when he lived in exile; for we are told, that at Paris he lived in splendour, and was the only Englishman, except the lord St. Albans, that kept a table.

His unlucky plot compelled him to sell a thousand a year; of the waste of the rest there is no account, except that he is confessed, by his biographer, to have been a bad economist. He seems to have deviated from the common practice; to have been a hoarder in his first years, and a squanderer in his last.

Of his course of studies, or choice of books, nothing is known more than that he professed himself unable to read Chapman's translation of Homer, without rapture. His opinion concerning the duty of a poet is contained in his declaration, that "he would blot from his works any line that did not contain some motive to virtue."

The characters, by which Waller intended to distinguish his writings, are sprightliness and dignity; in his smaller pieces, he endeavours to be gay; in the larger, to be great. Of his airy and light productions,

the chief source is gallantry, that attentive reverence of female excellence which has descended to us from the Gothick ages. As his poems are commonly occasional, and his addresses personal, he was not so liberally supplied with grand as with soft images; for beauty is more easily found than magnanimity.

The delicacy which he cultivated, restrains him to a certain nicety and caution, even when he writes upon the slightest matter. He has, therefore, in his whole volume, nothing burlesque, and seldom any thing ludicrous or familiar. He seems always to do his best; though his subjects are often unworthy of his care. It is not easy to think without some contempt on an author who is growing illustrious in his own opinion by verses, at one time, to a Lady who can do any thing but sleep when she pleases; at another, to a Lady who can sleep when she pleases; now, to a Lady on her passing through a crowd of people; then, on a Braid of divers colours, woven by four fair Ladies; on a tree cut in paper; or, to a Lady, from whom he received the copy of verses on the paper tree, which for many years had been missing.

Genius now and then produces a lucky trifle. We still read the Dove of Anacreon, and Sparrow of Catullus; and a writer naturally pleases himself with a performance, which owes nothing to the subject. But compositions merely pretty have the fate of other pretty things, and are quitted in time for something useful: they are flowers fragrant and fair, but of short duration; or they are blossoms to be valued only as they foretell fruits.

Among Waller's little poems are some which their excellency ought to secure from oblivion; as, to Amoret, comparing the different modes of regard, with which he looks on her and Sacharissa; and the verses on Love, that begin, "Anger in hasty words or blows."

In others he is not equally successful; sometimes his thoughts are deficient, and sometimes his expression.

The numbers are not always musical; as,

> Fair Venus, in thy soft arms
> The god of rage confine:
> For thy whispers are the charms
> Which only can divert his fierce design.
> What though he frown, and to tumult do incline;
> Thou the flame
> Kindled in his breast canst tame
> With that snow which unmelted lies on thine.

He seldom, indeed, fetches an amorous sentiment from the depths of science; his thoughts are, for the most part, easily understood, and his images such as the superficies of nature readily supplies; he has a just claim to popularity, because he writes to common degrees of knowledge; and is free, at least, from philosophical pedantry, unless, perhaps, the end of a song to the sun may be excepted, in which he is too much a Copernican. To which may be added, the simile of the palm in the verses, on her passing through a crowd; and a line in a more serious poem on the Restoration, about vipers and treacle, which can only be understood by those who happen to know the composition of the Theriaca.

His thoughts are sometimes hyperbolical, and his images unnatural:

> The plants admire,
> No less than those of old did Orpheus' lyre:
> If she sit down, with tops all tow'rds her bow'd,
> They round about her into arbours crowd:
> Or if she walks, in even ranks they stand,
> Like some well-marshall'd and obsequious band.

In another place:

> While in the park I sing, the listening deer
> Attend my passion, and forget to fear:
> When to the beeches I report my flame,
> They bow their heads, as if they felt the same:
> To gods appealing, when I reach their bowers,
> With loud complaints they answer me in showers.
> To thee a wild and cruel soul is given,
> More deaf than trees, and prouder than the heaven!

On the head of a stag:

> O fertile head! which every year
> Could such a crop of wonder bear!
> The teeming earth did never bring,
> So soon so hard, so huge a thing:
> Which might it never have been cast,
> Each year's growth added to the last,
> These lofty branches had supply'd
> The earth's bold sons' prodigious pride:
> Heaven with these engines had been scal'd,
> When mountains heap'd on mountains fail'd.

Sometimes, having succeeded in the first part, he makes a feeble conclusion. In the song of Sacharissa's and Amoret's Friendship, the two last stanzas ought to have been omitted.

His images of gallantry are not always in the highest degree delicate:

> Then shall my love this doubt displace,
> And gain such trust, that I may come
> And banquet sometimes on thy face,
> But make my constant meals at home.

Some applications may be thought too remote and unconsequential; as in the verses on the Lady Dancing:

> The sun in figures such as these
> Joys with the moon to play:
> To the sweet strains they advance,
> Which do result from their own spheres;
> As this nymph's dance
> Moves with the numbers which she hears.

Sometimes a thought, which might, perhaps, fill a distich, is expanded and attenuated, till it grows weak and almost evanescent:

> Chloris! since first our calm of peace
> Was frighted hence, this good we find,
> Your favours with your fears increase,
> And growing mischiefs make you kind.
> So the fair tree, which still preserves
> Her fruit, and state, while no wind blows,
> In storms from that uprightness swerves;
> And the glad earth about her strows
> With treasure from her yielding boughs.

His images are not always distinct; as, in the following passage, he confounds love, as a person, with love, as a passion:

> Some other nymphs, with colours faint,
> And pencil slow, may Cupid paint,
> And a weak heart, in time, destroy;
> She has a stamp, and prints the boy:
> Can, with a single look, inflame
> The coldest breast, the rudest tame.

His sallies of casual flattery are sometimes elegant and happy, as that in Return for the Silver Pen; and sometimes empty and trifling, as that upon the Card torn by the Queen. There are a few Lines written in the Dutchess's Tasso, which he is said, by

Fenton, to have kept a summer under correction. It happened to Waller, as to others, that his success was not always in proportion to his labour.

Of these petty compositions, neither the beauties nor the faults deserve much attention. The amorous verses have this to recommend them, that they are less hyperbolical than those of some other poets. Waller is not always at the last gasp; he does not die of a frown, nor live upon a smile. There is, however, too much love, and too many trifles. Little things are made too important; and the empire of beauty is represented as exerting its influence further than can be allowed by the multiplicity of human passions, and the variety of human wants. Such books, therefore, may be considered, as showing the world under a false appearance, and, so far as they obtain credit from the young and unexperienced, as misleading expectation, and misguiding practice.

Of his nobler and more weighty performances, the greater part is panegyrical: for of praise he was very lavish, as is observed by his imitator, lord Lansdowne:

> No satyr stalks within the hallow'd ground,
> But queens and heroines, kings and gods abound;
> Glory and arms and love are all the sound.

In the first poem, on the danger of the Prince on the coast of Spain, there is a puerile and ridiculous mention of Arion, at the beginning; and the last paragraph, on the Cable, is, in part, ridiculously mean, and in part, ridiculously tumid. The poem, however, is such as may be justly praised, without

much allowance for the state of our poetry and language at that time.

The two next poems are upon the king's behaviour at the death of Buckingham, and upon his navy.

He has, in the first, used the pagan deities with great propriety:

> 'Twas want of such a precedent as this,
> Made the old heathen frame their gods amiss.

In the poem on the Navy, those lines are very noble, which suppose the king's power secure against a second deluge; so noble, that it were almost criminal to remark the mistake of *centre* for *surface*, or to say that the empire of the sea would be worth little, if it were not that the waters terminate in land.

The poem upon Sallee has forcible sentiments; but the conclusion is feeble. That on the Repairs of St. Paul's has something vulgar and obvious; such as the mention of Amphion; and something violent and harsh; as,

> So all our minds with his conspire to grace
> The Gentiles' great apostle, and deface
> Those state-obscuring sheds, that, like a chain,
> Seem'd to confine, and fetter him again:
> Which the glad saint shakes off at his command,
> As once the viper from his sacred hand.
> So joys the aged oak, when we divide
> The creeping ivy from his injur'd side.

Of the two last couplets, the first is extravagant, and the second mean.

His praise of the queen is too much exaggerated; and the thought, that she "saves lovers, by cutting

off hope, as gangrenes are cured by lopping the limb," presents nothing to the mind but disgust and horrour.

Of the Battle of the Summer Islands, it seems not easy to say whether it is intended to raise terrour or merriment. The beginning is too splendid for jest, and the conclusion too light for seriousness. The versification is studied, the scenes are diligently displayed, and the images artfully amplified; but, as it ends neither in joy nor sorrow, it will scarcely be read a second time.

The Panegyrick upon Cromwell has obtained from the publick a very liberal dividend of praise, which, however, cannot be said to have been unjustly lavished; for such a series of verses had rarely appeared before in the English language. Of the lines some are grand, some are graceful, and all are musical. There is now and then a feeble verse, or a trifling thought; but its great fault is the choice of its hero.

The poem of the War with Spain begins with lines more vigorous and striking than Waller is accustomed to produce. The succeeding parts are variegated with better passages and worse. There is something too far-fetched in the comparison of the Spaniards drawing the English on, by saluting St. Lucar with cannon, "to lambs awakening the lion by bleating." The fate of the marquis and his lady, who were burnt in their ship, would have moved more, had the poet not made him die like the Phœnix, because he had spices about him, nor ex-

pressed their affection and their end, by a conceit, at once, false and vulgar:

> Alive, in equal flames of love they burn'd,
> And now together are to ashes turn'd.

The verses to Charles on his Return were doubtless intended to counterbalance the Panegyrick on Cromwell. If it has been thought inferiour to that with which it is naturally compared, the cause of its deficience has been already remarked.

The remaining pieces it is not necessary to examine singly. They must be supposed to have faults and beauties of the same kind with the rest. The Sacred Poems, however, deserve particular regard; they were the work of Waller's declining life, of those hours in which he looked upon the fame and the folly of the time past with the sentiments which his great predecessor, Petrarch, bequeathed to posterity, upon his review of that love and poetry which have given him immortality.

That natural jealousy which makes every man unwilling to allow much excellence in another, always produces a disposition to believe that the mind grows old with the body; and that he, whom we are now forced to confess superiour, is hastening daily to a level with ourselves. By delighting to think this of the living, we learn to think it of the dead; and Fenton, with all his kindness for Waller, has the luck to mark the exact time when his genius passed the zenith, which he places at his fifty-fifth year. This is to allot the mind but a small portion. Intellectual decay is, doubtless, not uncommon; but it

seems not to be universal. Newton was, in his eighty-fifth year, improving his chronology, a few days before his death; and Waller appears not, in my opinion, to have lost, at eighty-two, any part of his poetical power.

His Sacred Poems do not please like some of his other works; but before the fatal fifty-five, had he written on the same subjects, his success would hardly have been better.

It has been the frequent lamentation of good men, that verse has been too little applied to the purposes of worship, and many attempts have been made to animate devotion by pious poetry. That they have very seldom attained their end, is sufficiently known, and it may not be improper to inquire, why they have miscarried.

Let no pious ear be offended if I advance, in opposition to many authorities, that poetical devotion cannot often please. The doctrines of religion may, indeed, be defended in a didactick poem; and he who has the happy power of arguing in verse, will not lose it because his subject is sacred. A poet may describe the beauty and the grandeur of nature, the flowers of the spring, and the harvests of autumn, the vicissitudes of the tide, and the revolutions of the sky, and praise the maker for his works, in lines which no reader shall lay aside. The subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety; that of the description is not God, but the works of God.

Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between

God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man, admitted to implore the mercy of his creator, and plead the merits of his redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.

The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topicks of devotion are few, and, being few, are universally known; but, few as they are, they can be made no more; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment, and very little from novelty of expression.

Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those which repel the imagination: but religion must be shown as it is; suppression and addition equally corrupt it; and such as it is, it is known already.

From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension and elevation of his fancy; but this is rarely to be hoped by christians from metrical devotion. Whatever is great, desirable, or tremendous, is comprised in the name of the supreme being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted; infinity cannot be amplified; perfection cannot be improved.

The employments of pious meditation are faith, thanksgiving, repentance, and supplication. Faith, invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, the most joyful of all holy effusions, yet addressed to a being without

passions, is confined to a few modes, and is to be felt rather than expressed. Repentance, trembling in the presence of the judge, is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself through many topicks of persuasion; but supplication to God can only cry for mercy.

Of sentiments purely religious, it will be found that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that pious verse can do is to help the memory, and delight the ear, and, for these purposes, it may be very useful; but it supplies nothing to the mind. The ideas of christian theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestick for ornament; to recommend them by tropes and figures, is to magnify, by a concave mirror, the sidereal hemisphere.

As much of Waller's reputation was owing to the softness and smoothness of his numbers, it is proper to consider those minute particulars to which a versifier must attend.

He certainly very much excelled in smoothness most of the writers who were living when his poetry commenced. The poets of Elizabeth had attained an art of modulation, which was afterwards neglected or forgotten. Fairfax was acknowledged by him as his model; and he might have studied with advantage the poem of Davies[1], which, though

[1] Sir John Davies, entitled, Nosce Teipsum. This oracle expounded in two elegies; 1. Of Humane Knowledge: 2. Of the Soule of Man and the Immortalitie thereof, 1599. R.

merely philosophical, yet seldom leaves the ear ungratified.

But he was rather smooth than strong; of "the full resounding line," which Pope attributes to Dryden, he has given very few examples. The critical decision has given the praise of strength to Denham, and of sweetness to Waller.

His excellence of versification has some abatements. He uses the expletive *do* very frequently; and, though he lived to see it almost universally ejected, was not more careful to avoid it in his last compositions than in his first. Praise had given him confidence; and finding the world satisfied, he satisfied himself.

His rhymes are sometimes weak words: *so* is found to make the rhyme twice in ten lines, and occurs often as a rhyme through his book.

His double rhymes, in heroick verse, have been censured by Mrs. Phillips, who was his rival in the translation of Corneille's Pompey; and more faults might be found, were not the inquiry below attention.

He sometimes uses the obsolete termination of verbs, as *waxeth, affecteth;* and sometimes retains the final syllable of the preterite, as *amazed, supposed,* of which I know not whether it is not to the detriment of our language that we have totally rejected them.

Of triplets he is sparing; but he did not wholly forbear them: of an alexandrine he has given no example.

The general character of his poetry is elegance and gaiety. He is never pathetick, and very rarely sub-

lime. He seems neither to have had a mind much elevated by nature, nor amplified by learning. His thoughts are such as a liberal conversation and large acquaintance with life would easily supply. They had, however, then, perhaps, that grace of novelty which they are now often supposed to want by those who, having already found them in later books, do not know or inquire who produced them first. This treatment is unjust. Let not the original author lose by his imitators.

Praise, however, should be due before it is given. The author of Waller's life ascribes to him the first practice of what Erythræus and some late criticks call alliteration, of using in the same verse many words beginning with the same letter. But this knack, whatever be its value, was so frequent among early writers, that Gascoigne, a writer of the sixteenth century, warns the young poet against affecting it; Shakespeare, in the Midsummer Night's Dream, is supposed to ridicule it; and, in another play, the sonnet of Holofernes fully displays it.

He borrows too many of his sentiments and illustrations from the old mythology, for which it is vain to plead the example of ancient poets; the deities which they introduced so frequently, were considered as realities, so far as to be received by the imagination, whatever sober reason might even then determine. But of these images time has tarnished the splendour. A fiction, not only detected but despised, can never afford a solid basis to any position, though sometimes it may furnish a transient allu-

sion, or slight illustration. No modern monarch can be much exalted by hearing that, as Hercules had his club, he has his navy.

But of the praise of Waller, though much may be taken away, much will remain; for it cannot be denied that he added something to our elegance of diction, and something to our propriety of thought; and to him may be applied what Tasso said, with equal spirit and justice, of himself and Guarini, when, having perused the Pastor Fido, he cried out "if he had not read Aminta, he had never excelled it."

As Waller professed himself to have learned the art of versification from Fairfax, it has been thought proper to subjoin a specimen of his work, which, after Mr. Hoole's translation, will, perhaps, not be soon reprinted. By knowing the state in which Waller found our poetry, the reader may judge how much he improved it.

I

Erminia's steed (this while) his mistresse bore
Through forrests thicke among the shadie treene,
Her feeble hand the bridle reines forlore,
Halfe in a swoune she was for feare, I weene;
But her flit courser spared nere the more,
To beare her through the desart woods unseene
Of her strong foes, that chas'd her through the plaine,
And still pursu'd, but still pursu'd in vaine.

II

Like as the wearie hounds at last retire,
Windlesse, displeased, from the fruitlesse chace,
When the slie beast Tapisht in bush and brire,
No art nor paines can rowse out of his place:
The christian knights so full of shame and ire
Returned backe, with faint and wearie pace!
Yet still the fearful dame fled, swift as winde,
Nor euer staid, nor euer lookt behinde.

3

Through thicke and thinne, all night, all day, she driued,
Withouten comfort, companie, or guide,
Her plaints and teares with euery thought reuiued,
She heard and saw her greefes, but nought beside.
But when the sunne his burning chariot diued
In Thetis waue, and wearie teame vntide,
On Iordans sandie bankes her course she staid,
At last, there downe she light, and downe she laid.

4

Her teares, her drinke; her food, her sorrowings,
This was her diet that vnhappie night:
But sleepe (that sweet repose and quiet brings)
To ease the greefes of discontented wight,
Spred foorth his tender, soft, and nimble wings,
In his dull armes foulding the virgin bright;
And loue, his mother, and the graces kept
Strong watch and warde, while this faire ladie slept.

5

The birds awakte her with their morning song,
Their warbling musicke pearst her tender eare,
The murmuring brookes and whistling windes among
The ratling boughes, and leaues, their parts did beare;
Her eies vnclos'd beheld the groues along
Of swaines and shepherd groomes, that dwellings weare:
And that sweet noise, birds, winds, and waters sent,
Prouokte againe the virgin to lament.

6

Her plaints were interrupted with a sound
That seem'd from thickest bushes to proceed,
Some iolly shepheard sung a lustie round,
And to his voice had tun'd his oaten reed;
Thither she went, an old man there she found,
(At whose right hand his little flock did feed)
Sat making baskets, his three sonnes among,
That learn'd their father's art, and learn'd his song.

7

Beholding one in shining armes appeare,
The seelie man and his were sore dismaid;
But sweet Erminia comforted their feare,
Her ventall vp, her visage open laid.

You happie folke, of heau'n beloued deare,
Work on (quoth she) vpon your harmlesse traid,
These dreadfull armes, I beare, no warfare bring
To your sweet toile, nor those sweet tunes you sing.

8

But father, since this land, these townes and towres,
Destroied are with sword, with fire and spoile,
How may it be, unhurt, that you and yours
In safetie thus, applie your harmlesse toile?
My sonne (quoth he) this pore estate of ours
Is euer safe from storme of warlike broile;
This wildernesse doth vs in safetie keepe,
No thundring drum, no trumpet breakes our sleepe.

9

Haply iust heau'n's defence and shield of right,
Doth loue the innocence of simple swaines,
The thunderbolts on highest mountains light,
And seld or neuer strike the lower plaines:
So kings haue cause to feare Bellonaes might,
Not they whose sweat and toile their dinner gaines,
Nor ever greedie soldier was entised
By pouertie, neglected and despised.

10

O pouertie, chefe of the heau'nly brood,
Dearer to me than wealth or kingly crowne!
No wish for honour, thirst of other's good,
Can moue my hart, contented with my owne:
We quench our thirst with water of this flood,
Nor fear we poison should therein be throwne:
These little flocks of sheepe and tender goates
Giue milke for food, and wooll to make us coates.

11

We little wish, we need but little wealth,
From cold and hunger vs to cloath and feed;
These are my sonnes, their care preserues from stealth
Their father's flocks, nor servants moe I need:
Amid these groues I walke oft for my health,
And to the fishes, birds, and beastes giue heed,
How they are fed, in forrest, spring and lake,
And their contentment for ensample take.

12

Time was (for each one hath his doting time,
These siluer locks were golden tresses than)
That countrie life I hated as a crime,
And from the forrests sweet contentment ran,
To Memphis stately pallace would I clime,
And there became the mightie Caliphes man,
And though I but a simple gardner weare,
Yet could I marke abuses, see and heare.

13

Entised on with hope of future gaine,
I suffred long what did my soule displease;
But when my youth was spent, my hope was vaine,
I felt my native strength at last decrease;
I gan my losse of lustie yeeres complaine,
And wisht I had enjoy'd the countries peace;
I bod the court farewell, and with content
My later age here have I quiet spent.

14

While thus he spake, Erminia husht and still
His wise discourses heard, with great attention,
His speeches graue those idle fancies kill,
Which in her troubled soule bred such dissention;
After much thought reformed was her will,
Within those woods to dwell was her intention,
Till fortune should occasion new afford,
To turne her home to her desired lord.

15

She said, therefore, O shepherd fortunate!
That troubles some didst whilom feele and proue,
Yet liuest now in this contented state,
Let my mishap thy thoughts to pitie moue,
To entertaine me, as a willing mate
In shepherd's life, which I admire and loue;
Within these pleasant groues, perchance, my hart
Of her discomforts may vnload some part.

16

If gold or wealth, of most esteemed deare,
If iewells rich, thou diddest hold in prise,
Such store thereof, such plentie have I seen,
As to a greedie minde might well suffice:

With that downe trickled many a siluer teare,
Two christall streams fell from her watrie eies;
Part of her said misfortunes than she told,
And wept, and with her wept that shepherd old.

17

With speeches kinde, he gan the virgin deare
Towards his cottage gently home to guide;
His aged wife there made her homely cheare,
Yet welcomde her, and plast her by her side.
The princesse dond a poore pastoraes geare,
A kerchiefe course vpon her head she tide;
But yet her gestures and her lookes (I gesse)
Were such as ill beseem'd a shepherdesse.

18

Not those rude garments could obscure, and hide
The heau'nly beautie of her angel's face,
Nor was her princely ofspring damnifide,
Or ought disparag'de, by those labours bace;
Her little flocks to pasture would she guide,
And milke her goates, and in their folds them place,
Both cheese and butter could she make, and frame
Her selfe to please the shepherd and his dame.

# POMFRET

OF Mr. John Pomfret nothing is known but from a slight and confused account, prefixed to his poems by a nameless friend; who relates, that he was the son of the Rev. Mr. Pomfret, rector of Luton, in Bedfordshire; that he was bred at Cambridge[m], entered into orders, and was rector of Malden, in Bedfordshire, and might have risen in the church; but that, when he applied to Dr. Compton, bishop of London, for institution to a living of considerable value, to which he had been presented, he found a troublesome obstruction raised by a malicious interpretation of some passage in his Choice; from which it was inferred, that he considered happiness as more likely to be found in the company of a mistress than of a wife.

This reproach was easily obliterated; for it had happened to Pomfret, as to almost all other men who plan schemes of life; he had departed from his purpose, and was then married.

The malice of his enemies had, however, a very fatal consequence: the delay constrained his attendance in London, where he caught the smallpox, and died in 1703, in the thirty-sixth year of his age.

He published his poems in 1699; and has been always the favourite of that class of readers, who, without vanity or criticism, seek only their own amusement.

[m] He was of Queen's college there, and, by the University Register, took his bachelor's degree in 1684, and master's in 1668. His father was of Trinity.

His Choice exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions, and equal to common expectations; such a state as affords plenty and tranquillity, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures. Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's Choice.

In his other poems there is an easy volubility; the pleasure of smooth metre is afforded to the ear, and the mind is not oppressed with ponderous, or entangled with intricate, sentiment. He pleases many; and he who pleases many must have some species of merit.

OF the earl of Dorset the character has been drawn so largely and so elegantly by Prior, to whom he was familiarly known, that nothing can be added by a casual hand; and, as its author is so generally read, it would be useless officiousness to transcribe it.

Charles Sackville was born January 24, 1637. Having been educated under a private tutor, he travelled into Italy, and returned a little before the restoration. He was chosen into the first parliament that was called, for East Grimstead, in Sussex, and soon became a favourite of Charles the second; but undertook no publick employment, being too eager of the riotous and licentious pleasures, which young men of high rank, who aspired to be thought wits, at that time imagined themselves entitled to indulge.

One of these frolicks has, by the industry of Wood, come down to posterity. Sackville, who was then lord Buckhurst, with sir Charles Sedley and sir Thomas Ogle, got drunk at the Cock in Bow street, by Covent garden, and, going into the balcony, exposed themselves to the populace in very indecent postures. At last, as they grew warmer, Sedley stood forth naked and harangued the populace in such profane language, that the publick indignation was awakened: the crowd attempted to force the door, and, being repulsed, drove in the performers with stones, and broke the windows of the house.

For this misdemeanour they were indicted, and

Sedley was fined five hundred pounds: what was the sentence of the others is not known. Sedley employed Killigrew and another to procure a remission from the king; but (mark the friendship of the dissolute!) they begged the fine for themselves, and exacted it to the last groat.

In 1665, lord Buckhurst attended the duke of York, as a volunteer in the Dutch war; and was in the battle of June 3, when eighteen great Dutch ships were taken, fourteen others were destroyed, and Opdam, the admiral, who engaged the duke, was blown up beside him, with all his crew.

On the day before the battle, he is said to have composed the celebrated song, "To all you ladies now at land," with equal tranquillity of mind and promptitude of wit. Seldom any splendid story is wholly true. I have heard from the late earl of Orrery, who was likely to have good hereditary intelligence, that lord Buckhurst had been a week employed upon it, and only retouched or finished it on the memorable evening. But even this, whatever it may subtract from his facility, leaves him his courage.

He was soon after made a gentleman of the bedchamber, and sent on short embassies to France.

In 1674, the estate of his uncle, James Cranfield, earl of Middlesex, came to him by its owner's death, and the title was conferred on him the year after. In 1677, he became, by the death of his father, earl of Dorset, and inherited the estate of his family.

In 1684, having buried his first wife, of the family of Bagot, who left him no child, he married a daugh-

ter of the earl of Northampton, celebrated both for beauty and understanding.

He received some favourable notice from king James; but soon found it necessary to oppose the violence of his innovations, and with some other lords appeared in Westminster hall to countenance the bishops at their trial.

As enormities grew every day less supportable, he found it necessary to concur in the revolution. He was one of those lords who sat every day in council to preserve the publick peace, after the king's departure; and, what is not the most illustrious action of his life, was employed to conduct the princess Anne to Nottingham with a guard, such as might alarm the populace, as they passed, with false apprehensions of her danger. Whatever end may be designed, there is always something despicable in a trick.

He became, as may be easily supposed, a favourite of king William, who, the day after his accession, made him lord chamberlain of the household, and gave him afterwards the garter. He happened to be among those that were tossed with the king in an open boat sixteen hours, in very rough and cold weather, on the coast of Holland. His health afterwards declined; and, on Jan. 19, 1705–6, he died at Bath.

He was a man whose elegance and judgment were universally confessed, and whose bounty to the learned and witty was generally known. To the indulgent affection of the publick, lord Rochester bore

ample testimony in this remark: "I know not how it is, but lord Buckhurst may do what he will, yet is never in the wrong."

If such a man attempted poetry, we cannot wonder that his works were praised. Dryden, whom, if Prior tells truth, he distinguished by his beneficence, and who lavished his blandishments on those who are not known to have so well deserved them, undertaking to produce authors of our own country superiour to those of antiquity, says, "I would instance your lordship in satire, and Shakespeare in tragedy." Would it be imagined that, of this rival to antiquity, all the satires were little personal invectives, and that his longest composition was a song of eleven stanzas?

The blame, however, of this exaggerated praise falls on the encomiast, not upon the author; whose performances are, what they pretend to be, the effusions of a man of wit; gay, vigorous, and airy. His verses to Howard show great fertility of mind; and his Dorinda has been imitated by Pope.

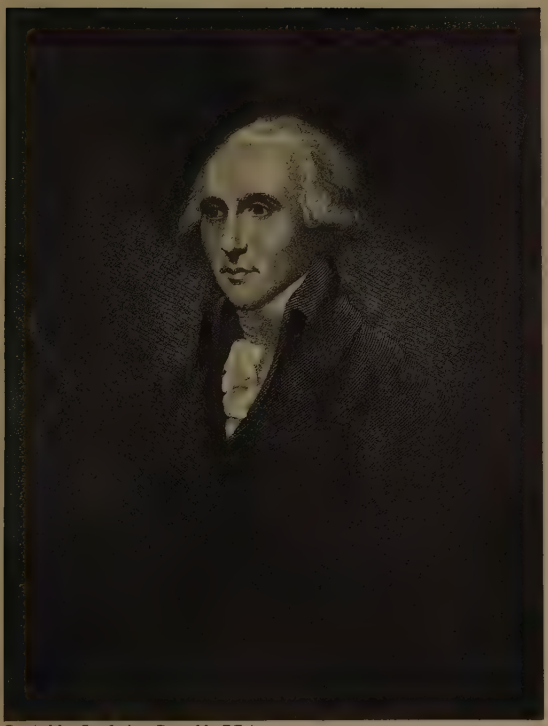
GEORGE STEPNEY, descended from the Stepneys of Pendegrast, in Pembrokeshire, was born at Westminster, in 1663. Of his father's condition or fortune I have no account[n]. Having receive the first part of his education at Westminster, where he passed six years in the college, he went, at nineteen, to Cambridge[o], where he continued a friendship begun at school with Mr. Montague, afterwards earl of Halifax. They came to London together, and are said to have been invited into publick life by the duke of Dorset[p].

His qualifications recommended him to many foreign employments, so that his time seems to have been spent in negotiations. In 1692, he was sent envoy to the elector of Brandenburgh; in 1693, to the imperial court; in 1694, to the elector of Saxony; in 1696, to the electors of Mentz and Cologne, and the congress at Frankfort; in 1698, a second time to Brandenburgh; in 1699, to the king of Poland; in 1701, again to the emperour; and, in 1706, to the States General. In 1697, he was made one of the commissioners of trade. His life was busy and not long. He died in 1707, and is buried

[n] It has been conjectured that our poet was either son or grandson of Charles, third son of sir John Stepney, the first baronet of that family. See Granger's History, vol. ii. p. 396. Edit. 8vo. 1775. Mr. Cole says, the poet's father was a grocer. Cole's manuscripts, in Brit. Mus. C.

[o] He was entered of Trinity college, and took his master's degree in 1689. H.

[p] Earl of Dorset.



Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

WILLIAM WINDHAM

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in Westminster Abbey, with this epitaph, which Jacob transcribed:

H. S. E.
GEORGIUS STEPNEIUS, armiger,
Vir,
Ob ingenii acumen,
Literarum scientiam,
Morum suavitatem,
Rerum usum,
Virorum amplissimorum consuetudinem,
Linguæ, styli, ac vitæ elegantiam,
Præclara officia cum Britanniæ tum Europæ præstita,
Sua ætate multum celebratus,
Apud posteros semper celebrandus;
Plurimas legationes obijt
Ea fide, diligentia, ac felicitate,
Ut augustissimorum principum
Gulielmi et Annæ
Spem in illo repositam
Numquam fefellerit,
Haud raro superaverit.
Post longum honorum cursum
Brevi temporis spatio confectum,
Cum naturæ parum, famæ satis vixerat,
Animam ad altiora aspirantem placide efflavit.

On the left hand,

G. S.
Ex equestri familia Stepneiorum,
De Pendegrast, in comitatu
Pembrochiensi oriundus,
Westmonasterii natus est, A. D. 1663,
Electus in collegium
Sancti Petri Westmonast. A. 1676,
Sancti Trinitatis Cantab. 1682.
Consiliariorum quibus Commercii
Cura commissa est 1697.
Chelseiæ mortuus, et, comitante
Magna procerum
Frequentia, huc elatus, 1707.

It is reported that the juvenile compositions of

Stepney "made grey authors blush." I know not whether his poems will appear such wonders to the present age. One cannot always easily find the reason for which the world has sometimes conspired to squander praise. It is not very unlikely that he wrote very early as well as he ever wrote; and the performances of youth have many favourers, because the authors yet lay no claim to publick honours, and are, therefore, not considered as rivals by the distributors of fame.

He apparently professed himself a poet, and added his name to those of the other wits in the version of Juvenal; but he is a very licentious translator, and does not recompense his neglect of the author by beauties of his own. In his original poems, now and then, a happy line may, perhaps, be found, and, now and then, a short composition may give pleasure. But there is, in the whole, little either of the grace of wit, or the vigour of nature.

# JOHN PHILIPS

JOHN PHILIPS was born on the 30th of December, 1676, at Bampton, in Oxfordshire; of which place his father, Dr. Stephen Philips, archdeacon of Salop, was minister. The first part of his education was domestick; after which he was sent to Winchester, where, as we are told by Dr. Sewel, his biographer, he was soon distinguished by the superiority of his exercises; and, what is less easily to be credited, so much endeared himself to his schoolfellows, by his civility and good nature, that they, without murmur or ill will, saw him indulged by the master with particular immunities. It is related, that, when he was at school, he seldom mingled in play with the other boys, but retired to his chamber; where his sovereign pleasure was to sit, hour after hour, while his hair was combed by somebody, whose service he found means to procure[q].

At school he became acquainted with the poets, ancient and modern, and fixed his attention particularly on Milton.

[q] Isaac Vossius relates, that he also delighted in having his hair combed when he could have it done by barbers or other persons skilled in the rules of prosody. Of the passage that contains this ridiculous fancy, the following is a translation: "Many people take delight in the rubbing of their limbs, and the combing of their hair; but these exercises would delight much more, if the servants at the baths, and of the barbers, were so skilful in this art, that they could express any measures with their fingers. I remember that more than once I have fallen into the hands of men of this sort, who could imitate any measure of songs in combing the hair, so as sometimes to express very intelligibly iambics, trochees, dactyls, &c. from whence there arose to me no small delight." See his treatise de Poematum Cantu et Viribus Rythmi. Oxon. 1673. p. 62. H.

In 1694, he entered himself at Christ church; a college, at that time, in the highest reputation, by the transmission of Busby's scholars to the care first of Fell, and afterwards of Aldrich. Here he was distinguished as a genius eminent among the eminent, and for friendship particularly intimate with Mr. Smith, the author of Phædra and Hippolytus. The profession which he intended to follow was that of physick; and he took much delight in natural history, of which botany was his favourite part.

His reputation was confined to his friends and to the university; till, about 1703, he extended it to a wider circle by the Splendid Shilling, which struck the publick attention with a mode of writing new and unexpected.

This performance raised him so high, that, when Europe resounded with the victory of Blenheim, he was, probably, with an occult opposition to Addison, employed to deliver the acclamation of the tories. It is said that he would willingly have declined the task, but that his friends urged it upon him. It appears that he wrote this poem at the house of Mr. St. John.

Blenheim was published in 1705. The next year produced his greatest work, the poem upon Cider, in two books; which was received with loud praises, and continued long to be read, as an imitation of Virgil's Georgicks, which needed not shun the presence of the original.

He then grew probably more confident of his own abilities, and began to meditate a poem on the Last

Day; a subject on which no mind can hope to equal expectation.

This work he did not live to finish; his diseases, a slow consumption and an asthma, put a stop to his studies, and on Feb. 15, 1708, at the beginning of his thirty-third year, put an end to his life.

He was buried in the cathedral of Hereford; and sir Simon Harcourt, afterwards lord chancellor, gave him a monument in Westminster Abbey. The inscription at Westminster was written, as I have heard, by Dr. Atterbury, though commonly given to Dr. Freind.

His epitaph at Hereford:

JOHANNES PHILIPS

Obijt 15 die Feb. Anno { Dom. 1708. / Ætat. suæ 32.

Cujus
Ossa si requiras, hanc urnam inspice:
Si ingenium nescias, ipsius opera consule;
Si tumulum desideras
Templum adi Westmonasteriense:
Qualis quantusque vir fuerit,
Dicat elegans illa et præclara,
Quæ cenotaphium ibi decorat,
Inscriptio.
Quam interim erga cognatos pius et officiosus,
Testetur hoc saxum
A Maria Philips matre ipsius pientissima
Dilecti filii memoriæ non sine lacrymis dicatum.

His epitaph at Westminster:

Herefordiæ conduntur ossa,
Hoc in delubro statuitur imago,
Britanniam omnem pervagatur fama,
JOHANNIS PHILIPS:
Qui viris bonis doctisque juxta charus,
Immortale suum ingenium,

# JOHN PHILIPS

Eruditione multiplici excultum,
Miro animi candore,
Eximia morum simplicitate,
Honestavit.
Litterarum amœniorum sitim,
Quam Wintoniæ puer sentire cœperat,
Inter Ædis Christi alumnos jugiter explevit.
In illo musarum domicilio
Præclaris æmulorum studiis excitatus,
Optimis scribendi magistris semper intentus,
Carmina sermone patrio composuit
A Græcis Latinisque fontibus feliciter deducta,
Atticis Romanisque auribus omnino digna,
Versuum quippe harmoniam
Rythmo didicerat,
Antiquo illo, libero, multiformi,
Ad res ipsas apto prorsus, et attemperato,
Non numeris in eundem fere orbem redeuntibus,
Non clausularum similiter cadentium sono
Metiri:
Uni in hoc laudis genere Miltono secundus,
Primoque pœne par.
Res seu tenues, seu grandes, seu mediocres
Ornandas sumserat,
Nusquam, non quod decuit,
Et vidit, et assecutis est,
Egregius, quocunque stylum verteret,
Fandi author, et modorum artifex.
Fas sit huic,
Auso licet a tua metrorum lege discedere,
O poesis Anglicanæ pater, atque conditor, Chaucere,
Alterum tibi latus claudere,
Vatum certe cineres tuos undique stipantium
Non dedecebit chorum.
Simon Harcourt, miles,
Viri bene de se, de litteris meriti,
Quoad viveret fautor,
Post obitum pie memor,
Hoc illi saxum poni voluit.
J. Philips, Stephani, S. T. P. Archidiaconi
Salop. filius, natus est Bamptoniæ
In agro Oxon. Dec. 30, 1676.
Obijt Herefordiæ, Feb. 15, 1708.

Philips has been always praised, without contradiction, as a man modest, blameless, and pious; who bore narrowness of fortune without discontent, and tedious and painful maladies without impatience; beloved by those that knew him, but not ambitious to be known. He was probably not formed for a wide circle. His conversation is commended for its innocent gaiety, which seems to have flowed only among his intimates; for I have been told, that he was in company silent and barren, and employed only upon the pleasures of his pipe. His addiction to tobacco is mentioned by one of his biographers, who remarks, that in all his writings, except Blenheim, he has found an opportunity of celebrating the fragrant fume. In common life he was probably one of those who please by not offending, and whose person was loved because his writings were admired. He died honoured and lamented, before any part of his reputation had withered, and before his patron St. John had disgraced him.

His works are few. The Splendid Shilling has the uncommon merit of an original design, unless it may be thought precluded by the ancient Centos. To degrade the sounding words and stately construction of Milton, by an application to the lowest and most trivial things, gratifies the mind with a momentary triumph over that grandeur, which hitherto held its captives in admiration; the words and things are presented with a new appearance, and novelty is always grateful where it gives no pain.

But the merit of such performances begins and

ends with the first author. He that should again adapt Milton's phrase to the gross incidents of common life, and even adapt it with more art, which would not be difficult, must yet expect but a small part of the praise which Philips has obtained; he can only hope to be considered as the repeater of a jest.

"The parody on Milton," says Gildon, "is the only tolerable production of its author." This is a censure too dogmatical and violent. The poem of Blenheim was never denied to be tolerable, even by those who do not allow its supreme excellence. It is, indeed, the poem of a scholar, "all inexpert of war;" of a man who writes books from books, and studies the world in a college. He seems to have formed his ideas of the field of Blenheim from the battles of the heroick ages, or the tales of chivalry, with very little comprehension of the qualities necessary to the composition of a modern hero, which Addison has displayed with so much propriety. He makes Marlborough behold at a distance the slaughter made by Tallard, then haste to encounter and restrain him, and mow his way through ranks made headless by his sword.

He imitates Milton's numbers indeed, but imitates them very injudiciously. Deformity is easily copied; and whatever there is in Milton which the reader wishes away, all that is obsolete, peculiar, or licentious, is accumulated with great care by Philips. Milton's verse was harmonious, in proportion to the general state of our metre in Milton's age; and, if

he had written after the improvements made by Dryden, it is reasonable to believe that he would have admitted a more pleasing modulation of numbers into his work; but Philips sits down with a resolution to make no more musick than he found; to want all that his master wanted, though he is very far from having what his master had. Those asperities, therefore, that are venerable in the Paradise Lost, are contemptible in the Blenheim.

There is a Latin ode written to his patron St. John, in return for a present of wine and tobacco, which cannot be passed without notice. It is gay and elegant, and exhibits several artful accommodations of classick expressions to new purposes. It seems better turned than the odes of Hannes[r].

To the poem on Cider, written in imitation of the Georgicks, may be given this peculiar praise, that it is grounded in truth; that the precepts which it contains are exact and just; and that it is, therefore, at once, a book of entertainment and of science. This I was told by Miller, the great gardener and botanist, whose expression was, that "there were many books written on the same subject in prose, which do not contain so much truth as that poem."

[r] This ode I am willing to mention, because there seems to be an errour in all the printed copies, which is, I find, retained in the last. They all read;

Quam Gratiarum cura decentium
O! O! labellis cui Venus insidet.

The author probably wrote,

Quam Gratiarum cura decentium
Ornat; labellis cui Venus insidet. Dr. J.

Hannes was professor of chemistry at Oxford, and wrote one or two poems in the Musæ Anglicanæ. J. B.

In the disposition of his matter, so as to intersperse precepts relating to the culture of trees with sentiments more generally alluring, and in easy and graceful transitions from one subject to another, he has very diligently imitated his master; but he, unhappily, pleased himself with blank verse, and supposed that the numbers of Milton, which impress the mind with veneration, combined as they are with subjects of inconceivable grandeur, could be sustained by images which, at most, can rise only to elegance. Contending angels may shake the regions of heaven in blank verse; but the flow of equal measures, and the embellishment of rhyme, must recommend to our attention the art of engrafting, and decide the merit of the redstreak and pearmain.

What study could confer, Philips had obtained; but natural deficience cannot be supplied. He seems not born to greatness and elevation. He is never lofty, nor does he often surprise with unexpected excellence: but, perhaps, to his last poem may be applied what Tully said of the work of Lucretius, that "it is written with much art, though with few blazes of genius."

The following fragment, written by Edmund Smith, upon the works of Philips, has been transcribed from the Bodleian manuscripts.

"A prefatory Discourse to the Poem on Mr. Philips, with a character of his writings.

"It is altogether as equitable some account should be given of those who have distinguished themselves

by their writings, as of those who are renowned for great actions. It is but reasonable they, who contribute so much to the immortality of others, should have some share in it themselves; and since their genius only is discovered by their works, it is just that their virtues should be recorded by their friends. For no modest men (as the person I write of was in perfection) will write their own panegyricks; and it is very hard that they should go without reputation, only because they the more deserve it. The end of writing Lives is for the imitation of the readers. It will be in the power of very few to imitate the duke of Marlborough: we must be content with admiring his great qualities and actions, without hopes of following them. The private and social virtues are more easily transcribed. The life of Cowley is more instructive, as well as more fine, than any we have in our language. And it is to be wished, since Mr. Philips had so many of the good qualities of that poet, that I had some of the abilities of his historian.

"The Grecian philosophers have had their lives written, their morals commended, and their sayings recorded. Mr. Philips had all the virtues to which most of them only pretended, and all their integrity, without any of their affectation.

"The French are very just to eminent men in this point; not a learned man nor a poet can die, but all Europe must be acquainted with his accomplishments. They give praise and expect it in their turns: they commend their Patrus and Molieres,

as well as their Condes and Turennes: their Pellisons and Racines have their elogies, as well as the prince whom they celebrate; and their poems, their mercuries, and orations, nay, their very gazettes are filled with the praises of the learned.

"I am satisfied, had they a Philips among them, and known how to value him; had they one of his learning, his temper, but above all of that particular turn of humour, that altogether new genius, he had been an example to their poets, and a subject of their panegyricks, and, perhaps, set in competition with the ancients, to whom only he ought to submit.

"I shall, therefore, endeavour to do justice to his memory, since nobody else undertakes it. And, indeed, I can assign no cause why so many of his acquaintance, that are as willing and more able than myself to give an account of him, should forbear to celebrate the memory of one so dear to them, but only that they look upon it as a work entirely belonging to me.

"I shall content myself with giving only a character of the person and his writings, without meddling with the transactions of his life, which was altogether private: I shall only make this known observation of his family, that there was scarce so many extraordinary men in any one. I have been acquainted with five of his brothers, of which three are still living, all men of fine parts, yet all of a very unlike temper and genius. So that their fruitful mother, like the mother of the gods, seems to have produced a numerous offspring, all of different, though

uncommon faculties. Of the living, neither their modesty, nor the humour of the present age, permits me to speak; of the dead, I may say something.

"One of them had made the greatest progress in the study of the law of nature and nations, of any one I know. He had perfectly mastered, and even improved, the notions of Grotius, and the more refined ones of Puffendorf. He could refute Hobbes with as much solidity as some of greater name, and expose him with as much wit as Echard. That noble study, which requires the greatest reach of reason and nicety of distinction, was not at all difficult to him. 'Twas a national loss to be deprived of one who understood a science so necessary, and yet so unknown in England. I shall add only, he had the same honesty and sincerity as the person I write of, but more heat: the former was more inclined to argue, the latter to divert: one employed his reason more; the other his imagination: the former had been well qualified for those posts, which the modesty of the latter made him refuse. His other dead brother would have been an ornament to the college of which he was a member. He had a genius either for poetry or oratory; and, though very young, composed several very agreeable pieces. In all probability he would have wrote as finely, as his brother did nobly. He might have been the Waller, as the other was the Milton of his time. The one might celebrate Marlborough, the other his beautiful offspring. This had not been so fit to describe

the actions of heroes, as the virtues of private men. In a word, he had been fitter for my place; and, while his brother was writing upon the greatest men that any age ever produced, in a style equal to them, he might have served as a panegyrist on him.

"This is all I think necessary to say of his family. I shall proceed to himself and his writings; which I shall first treat of, because I know they are censured by some out of envy, and more out of ignorance.

"The Splendid Shilling, which is far the least considerable, has the more general reputation, and, perhaps, hinders the character of the rest. The style agreed so well with the burlesque, that the ignorant thought it could become nothing else. Every body is pleased with that work. But to judge rightly of the other, requires a perfect mastery of poetry and criticism, a just contempt of the little turns and witticisms now in vogue, and, above all, a perfect understanding of poetical diction and description.

"All that have any taste of poetry will agree, that the great burlesque is much to be preferred to the low. It is much easier to make a great thing appear little, than a little one great: Cotton and others of a very low genius have done the former; but Philips, Garth, and Boileau, only the latter.

"A picture in miniature is every painter's talent; but a piece for a cupola, where all the figures are enlarged, yet proportioned to the eye, requires a master's hand.

"It must still be more acceptable than the low burlesque, because the images of the latter are mean

and filthy, and the language itself entirely unknown to all men of good breeding. The style of Billingsgate would not make a very agreeable figure at St. James's. A gentleman would take but little pleasure in language, which he would think it hard to be accosted in, or in reading words which he could not pronounce without blushing. The lofty burlesque is the more to be admired, because, to write it, the author must be master of two of the most different talents in nature. A talent to find out and expose what is ridiculous, is very different from that which is to raise and elevate. We must read Virgil and Milton for the one, and Horace and Hudibras for the other. We know that the authors of excellent comedies have often failed in the grave style, and the tragedian as often in comedy. Admiration and laughter are of such opposite natures, that they are seldom created by the same person. The man of mirth is always observing the follies and weaknesses, the serious writer the virtues or crimes, of mankind; one is pleased with contemplating a beau, the other a hero: even from the same object they would draw different ideas: Achilles would appear in very different lights to Thersites and Alexander. The one would admire the courage and greatness of his soul; the other would ridicule the vanity and rashness of his temper. As the satirist says to Hannibal:

"I, curre per Alpes,
Ut pueris placeas, et declamatio fias.

"The contrariety of style to the subject pleases the more strongly, because it is more surprising;

the expectation of the reader is pleasantly deceived, who expects an humble style from the subject, or a great subject from the style. It pleases the more universally, because it is agreeable to the taste both of the grave and the merry; but more particularly so to those who have a relish of the best writers, and the noblest sort of poetry. I shall produce only one passage out of this poet, which is the misfortune of his galligaskins:

> "My galligaskins, which have long withstood
> The winter's fury and encroaching frosts,
> By time subdued (what will not time subdue!)

"This is admirably pathetical, and shows very well the vicissitudes of sublunary things. The rest goes on to a prodigious height; and a man in Greenland could hardly have made a more pathetick and terrible complaint. Is it not surprising that the subject should be so mean, and the verse so pompous; that the least things in his poetry, as in a microscope, should grow great and formidable to the eye? especially considering that, not understanding French, he had no model for his style? that he should have no writer to imitate, and himself be inimitable? that he should do all this before he was twenty? at an age which is usually pleased with a glare of false thoughts, little turns, and unnatural fustian? at an age, at which Cowley, Dryden, and I had almost said Virgil, were inconsiderable? So soon was his imagination at its full strength, his judgment ripe, and his humour complete.

"This poem was written for his own diversion,

without any design of publication. It was communicated but to me; but soon spread, and fell into the hands of pirates. It was put out, vilely mangled, by Ben. Bragge; and impudently said to be corrected by the author. This grievance is now grown more epidemical; and no man now has a right to his own thoughts, or a title to his own writings. Xenophon answered the Persian, who demanded his arms; 'We have nothing now left but our arms and our valour: if we surrender the one, how shall we make use of the other?' Poets have nothing but their wits and their writings; and if they are plundered of the latter, I don't see what good the former can do them. To pirate, and publickly own it, to prefix their names to the works they steal, to own and avow the theft, I believe, was never yet heard of but in England. It will sound oddly to posterity, that, in a polite nation, in an enlightened age, under the direction of the most wise, most learned, and most generous encouragers of knowledge in the world, the property of a mechanick should be better secured than that of a scholar! that the poorest manual operations should be more valued than the noblest products of the brain! that it should be felony to rob a cobbler of a pair of shoes, and no crime to deprive the best author of his whole subsistence! that nothing should make a man a sure title to his own writings but the stupidity of them! that the works of Dryden should meet with less encouragement than those of his own Flecknoe, or Blackmore! that Tillotson and St. George, Tom Thumb and Temple, should be set on

an equal foot! This is the reason why this very paper has been so long delayed; and, while the most impudent and scandalous libels are publickly vended by the pirates, this innocent work is forced to steal abroad as if it were a libel.

"Our present writers are by these wretches reduced to the same condition Virgil was, when the centurion seized on his estate. But I don't doubt but I can fix upon the Mæcenas of the present age, that will retrieve them from it. But, whatever effect this piracy may have upon us, it contributed very much to the advantage of Mr. Philips: it helped him to a reputation which he neither desired nor expected, and to the honour of being put upon a work of which he did not think himself capable; but the event showed his modesty. And it was reasonable to hope, that he, who could raise mean subjects so high, should still be more elevated on greater themes; that he that could draw such noble ideas from a shilling, could not fail upon such a subject as the duke of Marlborough, "which is capable of heightening even the most low and trifling genius." And, indeed, most of the great works which have been produced in the world have been owing less to the poet than the patron. Men of the greatest genius are sometimes lazy, and want a spur; often modest, and dare not venture in publick: they certainly know their faults in the worst things; and even their best things they are not fond of, because the idea of what they ought to be is far above what they are. This induced me to believe that Virgil desired his works

might be burnt, had not the same Augustus that desired him to write them, preserved them from destruction. A scribbling beau may imagine a poet *may* be induced to write, by the very pleasure he finds in writing; but that is seldom, when people are necessitated to it. I have known men row, and use very hard labour, for diversion, which, if they had been tied to, they would have thought themselves very unhappy.

"But to return to Blenheim, that work so much admired by some, and censured by others. I have often wished he had wrote it in Latin, that he might be out of the reach of the empty criticks, who could have as little understood his meaning in that language as they do his beauties in his own.

"False criticks have been the plague of all ages; Milton himself, in a very polite court, has been compared to the rumbling of a wheelbarrow: he had been on the wrong side, and, therefore, could not be a good poet. And this, perhaps, may be Mr. Philips's case.

"But I take, generally, the ignorance of his readers to be the occasion of their dislike. People that have formed their taste upon the French writers can have no relish for Philips: they admire points and turns, and, consequently, have no judgment of what is great and majestick; he must look little in their eyes, when he soars so high as to be almost out of their view. I cannot, therefore, allow any admirer of the French to be a judge of Blenheim, nor any who takes Bouhours for a complete critick. He gen-

erally judges of the ancients by the moderns, and not the moderns by the ancients; he takes those passages of their own authors to be really sublime which come the nearest to it; he often calls that a noble and a great thought which is only a pretty and a fine one; and has more instances of the sublime out of Ovid de Tristibus, than he has out of all Virgil.

"I shall allow, therefore, only those to be judges of Philips, who make the ancients, and particularly Virgil, their standard.

"But, before I enter on this subject, I shall consider what is particular in the style of Philips, and examine what ought to be the style of heroick poetry; and next inquire how far he is come up to that style.

"His style is particular, because he lays aside rhyme, and writes in blank verse, and uses old words, and frequently postpones the adjective to the substantive, and the substantive to the verb; and leaves out little particles, *a*, and *the; her*, and *his;* and uses frequent appositions. Now let us examine, whether these alterations of style be conformable to the true sublime."

* * * * *

# WALSH

WILLIAM WALSH, the son of Joseph Walsh, esq. of Abberley, of Worcestershire, was born in 1663, as appears from the account of Wood, who relates, that at the age of fifteen he became, in 1678, a gentleman commoner of Wadham college.

He left the university without a degree, and pursued his studies in London and at home; that he studied, in whatever place, is apparent from the effect, for he became, in Mr. Dryden's opinion, "the best critick in the nation."

He was not, however, merely a critick or a scholar, but a man of fashion, and, as Dennis remarks, ostentatiously splendid in his dress. He was, likewise, a member of parliament and a courtier, knight of the shire for his native county in several parliaments; in another the representative of Richmond in Yorkshire; and gentleman of the horse to queen Anne, under the duke of Somerset.

Some of his verses show him to have been a zealous friend to the revolution; but his political ardour did not abate his reverence or kindness for Dryden, to whom he gave a Dissertation on Virgil's Pastorals, in which, however studied, he discovers some ignorance of the laws of French versification.

In 1705, he began to correspond with Mr. Pope, in whom he discovered very early the power of poetry. Their letters are written upon the pastoral comedy of the Italians, and those pastorals which Pope was then preparing to publish.

The kindnesses which are first experienced are seldom forgotten. Pope always retained a grateful memory of Walsh's notice, and mentioned him, in one of his latter pieces, among those that had encouraged his juvenile studies:

> Granville the polite,
> And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write.

In his Essay on Criticism he had given him more splendid praise; and, in the opinion of his learned commentator, sacrificed a little of his judgment to his gratitude.

The time of his death I have not learned. It must have happened between 1707, when he wrote to Pope, and 1711, when Pope praised him in his Essay. The epitaph makes him forty-six years old: if Wood's account be right, he died in 1709.

He is known more by his familiarity with greater men, than by any thing done or written by himself.

His works are not numerous. In prose he wrote Eugenia, a Defence of Women; which Dryden honoured with a preface.

Esculapius, or the Hospital of Fools, published after his death.

A Collection of Letters and Poems, amorous and gallant, was published in the volumes called Dryden's Miscellany, and some other occasional pieces.

To his poems and letters is prefixed a very judicious preface upon epistolary composition and amorous poetry.

In his Golden Age Restored, there was something of humour, while the facts were recent; but

it now strikes no longer. In his imitation of Horace, the first stanzas are happily turned; and, in all his writings, there are pleasing passages. He has, however, more elegance than vigour, and seldom rises higher than to be pretty.

# DRYDEN[s]

OF the great poet whose life I am about to delineate, the curiosity which his reputation must excite, will require a display more ample than can now be given. His contemporaries, however they reverenced his genius, left his life unwritten; and nothing, therefore, can be known beyond what casual mention and uncertain tradition have supplied.

John Dryden was born August 9, 1631[t], at Aldwinkle, near Oundle, the son of Erasmus Dryden, of Titchmersh; who was the third son of sir Erasmus Dryden, baronet, of Canons Ashby. All these places are in Northamptonshire; but the original stock of the family was in the county of Huntingdon[u].

[s] The life of Dryden is written with more than Johnson's usual copiousness of biography, and with peculiar vigour and justness of criticism. "None, perhaps, of the Lives of the Poets," says the Edinburgh Review, for October, 1808, "is entitled to so high a rank. No prejudice interfered with his judgment; he approved his politics; he could feel no envy of such established fame; he had a mind precisely formed to relish the excellencies of Dryden—more vigorous than refined; more reasoning than impassioned." Edinburgh Review, xxv. p. 117. Many dates, however, and little facts have been rectified by Mr. Malone, in his most minute Account of the Life and Writings of John Dryden; and sir Walter Scott, in the life prefixed to his edition of Dryden's works, has been still more industrious in the collection of incidents and contemporary writings, that can only interest the antiquary. Those to whom Johnson's life seems not sufficiently ample, we refer to the above works. For an eulogy on Dryden's powers, as a satirist, see the notes on the Pursuits of Literature. Ed.

[t] Mr. Malone has lately proved, that there is no satisfactory evidence for this date. The inscription on Dryden's monument says only "natus 1632." See Malone's Life of Dryden, prefixed to his Critical and Miscellaneous Prose Works, p. 5. note. C.

[u] Of Cumberland. Ibid. p. 10. C.

He is reported by his last biographer, Derrick, to have inherited, from his father, an estate of two hundred a year, and to have been bred, as was said, an anabaptist. For either of these particulars no authority is given[v]. Such a fortune ought to have secured him from that poverty which seems always to have oppressed him; or, if he had wasted it, to have made him ashamed of publishing his necessities. But, though he had many enemies, who, undoubtedly, examined his life with a scrutiny sufficiently malicious, I do not remember that he is ever charged with waste of his patrimony. He was, indeed, sometimes reproached for his first religion. I am, therefore, inclined to believe that Derrick's intelligence was partly true and partly erroneous[w].

From Westminster school, where he was instructed, as one of the king's scholars, by Dr. Busby, whom he long after continued to reverence, he was, in 1650, elected to one of the Westminster scholarships at Cambridge[x].

Of his school performances has appeared only a poem on the death of lord Hastings, composed with

[v] Mr. Malone has furnished us with a detailed account of our poet's circumstances, from which it appears, that although he was possessed of a sufficient income, in the early part of his life, he was considerably embarrassed at its close. See Malone's Life, p. 440.

[w] Mr. Derrick's Life of Dryden was prefixed to a very beautiful and correct edition of Dryden's Miscellanies, published by the Tonsons, in 1760, 4 vols. 8vo. Derrick's part, however, was poorly executed, and the edition never became popular. C.

[x] He went off to Trinity college, and was admitted to a bachelor's degree in Jan. 1653-4, and in 1657 was made M. A.

great ambition of such conceits as, notwithstanding the reformation begun by Waller and Denham, the example of Cowley still kept in reputation. Lord Hastings died of the smallpox; and his poet has made of the pustules first rosebuds, and then gems; at last exalts them into stars; and says,

> No comet need foretell his change drew on,
> Whose corpse might seem a constellation.

At the university he does not appear to have been eager of poetical distinction, or to have lavished his early wit either on fictitious subjects, or publick occasions. He probably considered, that he, who proposed to be an author, ought first to be a student. He obtained, whatever was the reason, no fellowship in the college. Why he was excluded cannot now be known, and it is vain to guess; had he thought himself injured, he knew how to complain. In the life of Plutarch he mentions his education in the college with gratitude; but, in a prologue at Oxford, he has these lines:

> Oxford to him a dearer name shall be
> Than his own mother-university:
> Thebes did his rude, unknowing youth engage;
> He chooses Athens in his riper age.

It was not till the death of Cromwell, in 1658, that he became a publick candidate for fame, by publishing Heroick Stanzas on the late Lord Protector[y]; which, compared with the verses of Sprat and Waller, on the same occasion, were sufficient to raise great expectations of the rising poet.

[y] This is a mistake; his poem on the death of lord Hastings appeared in a volume entitled Tears of the Muses on the death of Henry Lord Hastings. 8vo. 1649. M.

When the king was restored, Dryden, like the other panegyrists of usurpation, changed his opinion, or his profession, and published Astrea Redux; a poem on the happy Restoration and Return of his most sacred Majesty King Charles the second.

The reproach of inconstancy was, on this occasion, shared with such numbers, that it produced neither hatred nor disgrace! if he changed, he changed with the nation. It was, however, not totally forgotten when his reputation raised him enemies.

The same year he praised the new king in a second poem on his restoration. In the Astrea was the line,

> And horrid *stillness* first *invades* the *ear*,
> And in that silence we a tempest fear—

for which he was persecuted with perpetual ridicule, perhaps with more than was deserved. *Silence* is, indeed, mere privation; and, so considered, cannot *invade;* but privation, likewise, certainly is *darkness*, and probably *cold;* yet poetry has never been refused the right of ascribing effects or agency to them as to positive powers. No man scruples to say that *darkness* hinders him from his work; or that *cold* has killed the plants. Death is also privation; yet who has made any difficulty of assigning to death a dart, and the power of striking?

In settling the order of his works there is some difficulty; for, even when they are important enough to be formally offered to a patron, he does not commonly date his dedication; the time of writing and publishing is not always the same; nor can the first

editions be easily found, if even from them could be obtained the necessary information[z].

The time at which his first play was exhibited is not certainly known, because it was not printed till it was, some years afterwards, altered and revived; but since the plays are said to be printed in the order in which they were written, from the dates of some, those of others may be inferred; and thus it may be collected, that in 1663, in the thirty-second year of his life, he commenced a writer for the stage; compelled, undoubtedly, by necessity, for he appears never to have loved that exercise of his genius, or to have much pleased himself with his own dramas.

Of the stage, when he had once invaded it, he kept possession for many years; not, indeed, without the competition of rivals who sometimes prevailed, or the censure of criticks, which was often poignant, and often just; but with such a degree of reputation as made him, at least, secure of being heard, whatever might be the final determination of the publick.

His first piece was a comedy called the Wild Gallant[a]. He began with no happy auguries; for his performance was so much disapproved, that he was compelled to recall it, and change it from its imperfect state to the form in which it now appears, and which is yet sufficiently defective to vindicate the criticks.

[z] The order of his plays has been accurately ascertained by Mr. Malone. C.

[a] The duke of Guise was his first attempt in the drama, but laid aside, and afterwards new modelled. See Malone, p. 51.

I wish that there were no necessity of following the progress of his theatrical fame, or tracing the meanders of his mind through the whole series of his dramatick performances; it will be fit, however, to enumerate them, and to take especial notice of those that are distinguished by any peculiarity, intrinsick or concomitant; for the composition and fate of eight-and-twenty dramas, include too much of a poetical life to be omitted.

In 1664, he published the Rival Ladies, which he dedicated to the earl of Orrery, a man of high reputation both as a writer, and a statesman. In this play he made his essay of dramatick rhyme, which he defends in his dedication, with sufficient certainty of a favourable hearing; for Orrery was himself a writer of rhyming tragedies.

He then joined with sir Robert Howard in the Indian Queen, a tragedy in rhyme. The parts which either of them wrote are not distinguished.

The Indian Emperor was published in 1667. It is a tragedy in rhyme, intended for a sequel to Howard's Indian Queen. Of this connexion notice was given to the audience by printed bills, distributed at the door; an expedient supposed to be ridiculed in the Rehearsal, where Bayes tell how many reams he has printed, to instil into the audience some conception of his plot.

In this play is the description of night, which Rymer has made famous by preferring it to those of all other poets.

The practice of making tragedies in rhyme was

introduced soon after the restoration, as it seems, by the earl of Orrery, in compliance with the opinion of Charles the second, who had formed his taste by the French theatre; and Dryden, who wrote, and made no difficulty of declaring that he wrote, only to please, and who, perhaps, knew that by his dexterity of versification he was more likely to excel others in rhyme than without it, very readily adopted his master's preference. He, therefore, made rhyming tragedies, till, by the prevalence of manifest propriety, he seems to have grown ashamed of making them any longer.

To this play is prefixed a very vehement defence of dramatick rhyme, in confutation of the preface to the Duke of Lerma, in which sir Robert Howard had censured it.

In 1667, he published Annus Mirabilis, the Year of Wonders, which may be esteemed one of his most elaborate works.

It is addressed to sir Robert Howard by a letter, which is not properly a dedication; and, writing to a poet, he has interspersed many critical observations, of which some are common, and some, perhaps, ventured without much consideration. He began, even now, to exercise the domination of conscious genius, by recommending his own performance: "I am satisfied that as the prince and general [Rupert and Monk] are incomparably the best subjects I ever had, so what I have written on them is much better than what I have performed on any other. As I have endeavoured to adorn my poem

with noble thoughts, so much more to express those thoughts with elocution."

It is written in quatrains, or heroick stanzas of four lines; a measure which he had learned from the Gondibert of Davenant, and which he then thought the most majestick that the English language affords. Of this stanza he mentions the incumbrances, increased as they were by the exactness which the age required. It was, throughout his life, very much his custom to recommend his works, by representation of the difficulties that he had encountered, without appearing to have sufficiently considered, that where there is no difficulty there is no praise.

There seems to be, in the conduct of sir Robert Howard and Dryden towards each other, something that is not now easily to be explained[b]. Dryden, in his dedication to the earl of Orrery, had defended dramatick rhyme; and Howard, in the preface to a collection of plays, had censured his opinion. Dryden vindicated himself in his Dialogue on Dramatick Poetry: Howard, in his preface to the Duke of Lerma, animadverted on the vindication; and Dryden, in a preface to the Indian Emperor, replied to the animadversions with great asperity, and almost with contumely. The dedication to this play is dated the year in which the Annus Mirabilis was published. Here appears a strange inconsistency; but Langbaine affords some help, by relating that the answer to Howard was not published in the first edition of the play, but was added when it was

[b] See Malone, p. 91.

afterwards reprinted; and, as the Duke of Lerma did not appear till 1668, the same year in which the dialogue was published, there was time enough for enmity to grow up between authors, who, writing both for the theatre, were naturally rivals.

He was now so much distinguished, that, in 1668[c], he succeeded to sir William Davenant as poet laureate. The salary of the laureate had been raised in favour of Jonson, by Charles the first, from a hundred marks to one hundred pounds a year, and a tierce of wine; a revenue, in those days, not inadequate to the conveniencies of life.

The same year he published his Essay on Dramatick Poetry, an elegant and instructive dialogue; in which we are told, by Prior, that the principal character is meant to represent the duke of Dorset. This work seems to have given Addison a model for his Dialogues upon Medals.

Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen, 1668, is a tragi-comedy. In the preface he discusses a curious question, whether a poet can judge well of his own productions? and determines very justly, that, of the plan and disposition, and all that can be reduced to principles of science, the author may depend upon his own opinion; but that, in those parts where fancy predominates, self-love may easily deceive. He might have observed, that what is good only because it pleases, cannot be pronounced good till it has been found to please.

[c] He did not obtain the laurel till Aug. 18, 1670, but Mr. Malone informs us, the patent had a retrospect, and the salary commenced from the Midsummer after Davenant's death. C.

Sir Martin Mar-all, 1668, is a comedy published without preface or dedication, and at first without the name of the author. Langbaine charges it, like most of the rest, with plagiarism; and observes, that the song is translated from Voiture, allowing, however, that both the sense and measure are exactly observed.

The Tempest, 1670, is an alteration of Shakespeare's play, made by Dryden in conjunction with Davenant; "whom," says he, "I found of so quick a fancy, that nothing was proposed to him in which he could not suddenly produce a thought extremely pleasant and surprising; and those first thoughts of his, contrary to the Latin proverb, were not always the least happy; and as his fancy was quick, so, likewise, were the products of it remote and new. He borrowed not of any other; and his imaginations were such as could not easily enter into any other man."

The effect produced by the conjunction of these two powerful minds was, that to Shakespeare's monster, Caliban, is added a sister monster, Sycorax; and a woman, who, in the original play, had never seen a man, is, in this, brought acquainted with a man that had never seen a woman.

About this time, in 1673, Dryden seems to have had his quiet much disturbed by the success of the Emperess of Morocco, a tragedy written in rhyme, by Elkanah Settle; which was so much applauded, as to make him think his supremacy of reputation in some danger. Settle had not only been prosperous

on the stage, but, in the confidence of success, had published his play, with sculptures and a preface of defiance. Here was one offence added to another; and, for the last blast of inflammation, it was acted at Whitehall by the court ladies.

Dryden could not now repress those emotions, which he called indignation, and others jealousy; but wrote upon the play and the dedication such criticism as malignant impatience could pour out in haste.

Of Settle he gives this character: "He's an animal of a most deplored understanding, without reading and conversation. His being is in a twilight of sense, and some glimmering of thought, which he can never fashion into wit or English. His style is boisterous and rough-hewn, his rhyme incorrigibly lewd, and his numbers perpetually harsh and ill-sounding. The little talent which he has, is fancy. He sometimes labours with a thought; but, with the pudder he makes to bring it into the world, 'tis commonly stillborn; so that, for want of learning and elocution, he will never be able to express any thing either naturally or justly."

This is not very decent; yet this is one of the pages in which criticism prevails most over brutal fury.

He proceeds: "He has a heavy hand at fools, and a great felicity in writing nonsense for them. Fools they will be, in spite of him. His king, his two emperesses, his villain, and his sub-villain, nay, his hero, have all a certain natural cast of the father—their

folly was born and bred in them, and something of the Elkanah will be visible."

This is Dryden's general declamation; I will not withhold from the reader a particular remark. Having gone through the first act, he says: "To conclude this act with the most rumbling piece of nonsense spoken yet:

> "To flatt'ring lightning our feign'd smiles conform,
> Which, back'd with thunder, do but gild a storm.

"*Conform a smile to lightning*, make a *smile* imitate *lightning*, and, *flattering lightning:* lightning, sure, is a threatening thing. And this lightning must *gild a storm.* Now, if I must conform my smiles to light ning, then my smiles must gild a storm too: to *gild* with *smiles*, is a new invention of gilding. And gild a storm by being *backed with thunder*. Thunder is part of the storm; so one part of the storm must help to *gild* another part, and help by *backing;* as if a man would gild a thing the better for being backed, or having a load upon his back. So that here is *gilding* by *conforming*, *smiling*, *lightning*, *backing*, and *thundering*. The whole is as if I should say thus: I will make my counterfeit smiles look like a flattering stonehorse, which, being backed with a trooper, does but gild the battle. I am mistaken, if nonsense is not here pretty thick sown. Sure the poet writ these two lines aboard some smack in a storm, and, being sea-sick, spewed up a good lump of clotted nonsense at once."

Here is, perhaps, a sufficient specimen; but as the pamphlet, though Dryden's, has never been thought

worthy of republication, and is not easily to be found, it may gratify curiosity to quote it more largely:

> "Whene'er she bleeds,
> He no severer a damnation needs,
> That dares pronounce the sentence of her death,
> Than the infection that attends that breath.

"*That attends that breath.* The poet is at *breath* again; *breath* can never scape him; and here he brings in a *breath* that must be *infectious* with *pronouncing* a sentence; and this sentence is not to be pronounced till the condemned party *bleeds;* that is, she must be executed first, and sentenced after; and the *pronouncing* of this *sentence* will be infectious; that is, others will catch the disease of that sentence, and this infecting of others will torment a man's self. The whole is thus: when she bleeds, thou needest no greater hell or torment to thyself, than infecting of others by pronouncing a sentence upon her. What hodge-podge does he make here! Never was Dutch grout such clogging, thick, indigestible stuff. But this is but a taste to stay the stomach; we shall have a more plentiful mess presently.

"Now to dish up the poet's broth, that I promised;

> "For when we're dead, and our freed souls enlarg'd,
> Of nature's grosser burden we're discharg'd,
> Then gently, as a happy lover's sigh,
> Like wand'ring meteors through the air we'll fly,
> And in our airy walk, as subtle guests,
> We'll steal into our cruel fathers' breasts,
> There read their souls, and track each passion's sphere:
> See how revenge moves there, ambition here!
> And in their orbs view the dark characters
> Of sieges, ruins, murders, blood, and wars.
> We'll blot out all those hideous draughts, and write
> Pure and white forms; then with a radiant light

Their breasts encircle, till their passions be
Gentle as nature in its infancy;
Till, soften'd by our charms, their furies cease,
And their revenge resolves into a peace.
Thus by our death their quarrel ends,
Whom living we made foes, dead we'll make friends.

"If this be not a very liberal mess, I will refer myself to the stomach of any moderate guest. And a rare mess it is, far excelling any Westminster whitebroth. It is a kind of giblet porridge, made of the giblets of a couple of young geese, stodged full of meteors, orbs, spheres, track, hideous draughts, dark characters, white forms, and radiant lights; designed not only to please appetite, and indulge luxury, but it is also physical, being an approved medicine to purge choler: for it is propounded by Morena, as a receipt to cure their fathers of their cholerick humours; and, were it written in characters as barbarous as the words, might very well pass for a doctor's bill. To conclude: it is porridge, 'tis a receipt, 'tis a pig with a pudding in the belly, 'tis I know not what: for, certainly, never any one that pretended to write sense, had the impudence before to put such stuff as this into the mouths of those that were to speak it before an audience, whom he did not take to be all fools; and, after that, to print it too, and expose it to the examination of the world. But let us see what we can make of this stuff:

"For when we're dead, and our freed souls enlarg'd—

"Here he tells us what it is to be *dead;* it is to have *our freed souls set free.* Now, if to have a soul set

free, is to be dead; then to have a *freed soul* set free, is to have a dead man die.

"Then gentle, as a happy lover's sigh—

"They two like one *sigh*, and that one *sigh* like two wandering meteors,

"Shall fly through the air—

"That is, they shall mount above like falling stars, or else they shall skip like two Jacks with lanterns, or Will with a wisp, and Madge with a candle.

"*And in their airy walk steal into their cruel fathers' breasts, like subtle guests.* So that their *fathers' breasts* must be in an *airy walk*, an airy *walk* of a *flier. And there they will read their souls, and track the spheres of their passions.* That is, these walking fliers, Jack with a lantern, &c. will put on his spectacles, and fall a *reading souls*, and put on his pumps and fall a *tracking of spheres;* so that he will read and run, walk and fly, at the same time! Oh! Nimble Jack! *Then he will see, how revenge here, how ambition there*——The birds will hop about. *And then view the dark characters of sieges, ruins, murders, blood, and wars, in their orbs: track the characters* to their forms! Oh! rare sport for Jack! Never was place so full of game as these breasts! You cannot stir, but flush a sphere, start a character, or unkennel an orb!"

Settle's is said to have been the first play embellished with sculptures; those ornaments seem to have given poor Dryden great disturbance. He tries, however, to ease his pain by venting his malice in a parody:

"The poet has not only been so impudent to expose all this stuff, but so arrogant to defend it with an epistle; like a saucy booth-keeper, that, when he had put a cheat upon the people, would wrangle and fight with any that would not like it, or would offer to discover it; for which arrogance our poet receives this correction; and, to jerk him a little the sharper, I will not transpose his verse, but by the help of his own words transnonsense sense, that, by my stuff, people may judge the better what his is:

"Great boy, thy tragedy and sculptures done,
From press and plates, in fleets do homeward come;
And in ridiculous and humble pride,
Their course in ballad-singers' baskets guide,
Whose greasy twigs do all new beauties take,
From the gay shows thy dainty sculptures make.
Thy lines a mess of rhyming nonsense yield,
A senseless tale, with flattering fustian fill'd.
No grain of sense does in one line appear,
Thy words big bulks of boist'rous bombast bear,
With noise they move, and from play'rs' mouths rebound,
When their tongues dance to thy words' empty sound.
By thee inspir'd the rumbling verses roll,
As if that rhyme and bombast lent a soul:
And with that soul they seem taught duty too;
To huffing words does humble nonsense bow,
As if it would thy worthless worth enhance,
To th' lowest rank of fops thy praise advance,
To whom, by instinct, all thy stuff is dear:
Their loud claps echo to the theatre:
From breaths of fools thy commendation spreads,
Fame sings thy praise with mouths of loggerheads.
With noise and laughing each thy fustian greets,
'Tis clapt by choirs of empty-headed cits,
Who have their tribute sent, and homage given,
As men in whispers send loud noise to heaven.

"Thus I have daubed him with his own puddle: and now we are come from aboard his dancing,

masking, rebounding, breathing fleet; and, as if we had landed at Gotham, we meet nothing but fools and nonsense."

Such was the criticism to which the genius of Dryden could be reduced, between rage and terrour; rage with little provocation, and terrour with little danger. To see the highest minds thus leveled with the meanest, may produce some solace to the consciousness of weakness, and some mortification to the pride of wisdom. But let it be remembered, that minds are not levelled in their powers but when they are first levelled in their desires. Dryden and Settle had both placed their happiness in the claps of multitudes.

An Evening's Love, or the Mock Astrologer, a comedy, 1671, is dedicated to the illustrious duke of Newcastle, whom he courts by adding to his praises those of his lady, not only as a lover but a partner of his studies. It is unpleasing to think how many names, once celebrated, are since forgotten. Of Newcastle's works nothing is now known but his Treatise on Horsemanship.

The preface seems very elaborately written, and contains many just remarks on the fathers of English drama. Shakespeare's plots, he says, are in the hundred novels of Cinthio; those of Beaumont and Fletcher in Spanish Stories; Jonson only made them for himself. His criticisms upon tragedy, comedy, and farce, are judicious and profound. He endeavours to defend the immorality of some of his comedies by the example of former writers; which

is only to say, that he was not the first, nor, perhaps, the greatest offender. Against those that accused him of plagiarism he alleges a favourable expression of the king: "He only desired that they, who accuse me of thefts, would steal him plays like mine;" and then relates how much labour he spends in fitting for the English stage what he borrows from others.

Tyrannick Love, or the Virgin Martyr, 1672, was another tragedy in rhyme, conspicuous for many passages of strength and elegance, and many of empty noise and ridiculous turbulence. The rants of Maximin have been always the sport of criticism; and were, at length, if his own confession may be trusted, the shame of the writer.

Of this play he takes care to let the reader know, that it was contrived and written in seven weeks. Want of time was often his excuse, or, perhaps, shortness of time was his private boast, in the form of an apology.

It was written before the Conquest of Granada, but published after it. The design is to recommend piety: "I considered that pleasure was not the only end of poesy; and that even the instructions of morality were not so wholly the business of a poet, as that precepts and examples of piety were to be omitted; for to leave that employment altogether to the clergy, were to forget that religion was first taught in verse, which the laziness or dulness of succeeding priesthood turned afterwards into prose." Thus foolishly could Dryden write, rather than not show his malice to the parsons.

The two parts of the Conquest of Granada, 1672, are written with a seeming determination to glut the publick with dramatick wonders; to exhibit, in its highest elevation, a theatrical meteor of incredible love and impossible valour, and to leave no room for a wilder flight to the extravagance of posterity. All the rays of romantick heat, whether amorous or warlike, glow in Almanzor, by a kind of concentration. He is above all laws; he is exempt from all restraints; he ranges the world at will, and governs wherever he appears. He fights without inquiring the cause, and loves, in spite of the obligations of justice, of rejection by his mistress, and of prohibition from the dead. Yet the scenes are, for the most part, delightful; they exhibit a kind of illustrious depravity, and majestick madness; such as, if it is sometimes despised, is often reverenced, and in which the ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing.

In the epilogue to the second part of the Conquest of Granada, Dryden indulges his favourite pleasure of discrediting his predecessors; and this epilogue he has defended by a long postscript. He had promised a second dialogue, in which he should more fully treat of the virtues and faults of the English poets, who have written in the dramatick, epick, or lyrick way. This promise was never formally performed; but, with respect to the dramatick writers, he has given us in his prefaces, and in this postscript, something equivalent; but his purpose being to exalt himself by the comparison, he shows faults distinctly, and only praises excellence in general terms.

A play thus written, in professed defiance of probability, naturally drew down upon itself the vultures of the theatre. One of the criticks that attacked it was Martin Clifford, to whom Sprat addressed the Life of Cowley, with such veneration of his critical powers as might naturally excite great expectations of instruction from his remarks. But let honest credulity beware of receiving characters from contemporary writers. Clifford's remarks, by the favour of Dr. Percy, were, at last, obtained; and that no man may ever want them more, I will extract enough to satisfy all reasonable desire.

In the first letter his observation is only general: "You do live," says he, "in as much ignorance and darkness as you did in the womb: your writings are like a Jack-of-all-trades' shop; they have a variety, but nothing of value; and if thou art not the dullest plant-animal that ever the earth produced, all that I have conversed with are strangely mistaken in thee."

In the second, he tells him that Almanzor is not more copied from Achilles that from Ancient Pistol: "But I am," says he, "strangely mistaken if I have not seen this very Almanzor of yours in some disguise about this town, and passing under another name. Pr'ythee tell me true, was not this Huffcap once the Indian Emperor? and, at another time, did he not call himself Maximin? Was not Lyndaraxa once called Almeira? I mean under Montezuma the Indian Emperor. I protest and vow they are either the same, or so alike that I cannot, for

my heart, distinguish one from the other. You are, therefore, a strange unconscionable thief; thou art not content to steal from others, but dost rob thy poor wretched self too."

Now was Settle's time to take his revenge. He wrote a vindication of his own lines; and, if he is forced to yield any thing, makes reprisals upon his enemy. To say that his answer is equal to the censure, is no high commendation. To expose Dryden's method of analyzing his expressions, he tries the same experiment upon the description of the ships in the Indian Emperor, of which, however, he does not deny the excellence; but intends to show, that, by studied misconstruction, every thing may be equally represented as ridiculous. After so much of Dryden's elegant animadversions, justice requires that something of Settle's should be exhibited. The following observations are, therefore, extracted from a quarto pamphlet of ninety-five pages:

> "Fate after him below with pain did move,
> And victory could scarce keep pace above.

"These two lines, if he can show me any sense or thought in, or any thing but bombast and noise, he shall make me believe every word in his observations on Morocco sense.

"In the Empress of Morocco were these lines:

> "I'll travel then to some remoter sphere,
> Till I find out new worlds, and crown you there.

"On which Dryden made this remark:

"'I believe our learned author takes a sphere for a country: the sphere of Morocco; as if Morocco

were the globe of earth and water; but a globe is no sphere neither, by his leave,' &c. So *sphere* must not be sense, unless it relate to a circular motion about a globe, in which sense the astronomers use it. I would desire him to expound those lines in Granada:

> "I'll to the turrets of the palace go,
> And add new fire to those that fight below.
> Thence, hero-like, with torches by my side,
> (Far be the omen though) my love I'll guide.
> No, like his better fortune I'll appear,
> With open arms, loose veil, and flowing hair,
> Just flying forward from my rowling sphere.

"I wonder, if he be so strict, how he dares make so bold with *sphere* himself, and be so critical in other men's writings. Fortune is fancied standing on a globe, not on a *sphere*, as he told us in the first act.

"Because 'Elkanah's similes are the most unlike things to what they are compared in the world,' I'll venture to start a simile in his Annus Mirabilis: he gives this poetical description of the ship called the London:

> "The goodly London in her gallant trim,
> The phœnix-daughter of the vanquisht old,
> Like a rich bride does on the ocean swim,
> And on her shadow rides in floating gold.
> Her flag aloft spread ruffling in the wind,
> And sanguine streamers seem'd the flood to fire:
> The weaver, charm'd with what his loom design'd,
> Goes on to sea, and knows not to retire.
> With roomy decks, her guns of mighty strength,
> Whose low-laid mouths each mounting billow laves,
> Deep in her draught, and warlike in her length,
> She seems a sea-wasp flying on the waves.

"What a wonderful pother is here, to make all these poetical beautifications of a ship! that is a *phœnix*

in the first stanza, and but a *wasp* in the last: nay, to make his humble comparison of a *wasp* more ridiculous, he does not say it flies upon the waves as nimbly as a wasp, or the like, but it seemed a *wasp*. But our author at the writing of this was not in his altitudes, to compare ships to floating palaces: a comparison to the purpose, was a perfection he did not arrive to till his Indian Emperor's days. But, perhaps, his similitude has more in it than we imagine; this ship had a great many guns in her, and they, put all together, made the sting in the wasp's tail; for this is all the reason I can guess, why it seem'd a *wasp*. But, because we will allow him all we can to help out, let it be a *phœnix sea-wasp*, and the rarity of such an animal may do much towards heightening the fancy.

"It had been much more to his purpose, if he had designed to render the senseless play little, to have searched for some such pedantry as this:

> "Two ifs scarce make one possibility.
> If justice will take all and nothing give,
> Justice, methinks, is not distributive.
> To die or kill you, is the alternative.
> Rather than take your life, I will not live.

"Observe how prettily our author chops logick in heroick verse. Three such fustian canting words as *distributive*, *alternative*, and *two ifs*, no man but himself would have come within the noise of. But he's a man of general learning, and all comes into his play.

"Twould have done well too if he could have

met with a rant or two, worth the observation; such as,

> "Move swiftly, sun, and fly a lover's pace,
> Leave months and weeks behind thee in thy race.

"But surely the sun, whether he flies a lover's or not a lover's pace, leaves weeks and months, nay, years too, behind him in his race.

"Poor Robin, or any other of the philo-mathematicks, would have given him satisfaction in the point:

> "If I could kill thee now, thy fate's so low,
> That I must stoop, ere I can give the blow.
> But mine is fixt so far above thy crown,
> That all thy men,
> Piled on thy back, can never pull it down.

"Now where that is, Almanzor's fate is fixt, I cannot guess; but, wherever it is, I believe Almanzor, and think that all Abdalla's subjects, piled upon one another, might not pull down his fate so well as without piling: besides, I think Abdalla so wise a man, that, if Almanzor had told him piling his men upon his back might do the feat, he would scarce bear such a weight, for the pleasure of the exploit; but it is a huff, and let Abdalla do it if he dare.

> "The people like a headlong torrent go,
> And ev'ry dam they break or overflow.
> But, unoppos'd, they either lose their force,
> Or wind in volumes to their former course.

"A very pretty allusion, contrary to all sense or reason. Torrents, I take it, let them wind never so much, can never return to their former course, unless he can suppose that fountains can go upwards,

which is impossible; nay, more, in the foregoing page he tells us so too; a trick of a very unfaithful memory:

"But can no more than fountains upward flow;

"which of a *torrent*, which signifies a rapid stream, is much more impossible. Besides, if he goes to quibble, and say that it is possible by art water may be made return, and the same water run twice in one and the same channel: then he quite confutes what he says; for it is by being opposed, that it runs into its former course; for all engines that make water so return, do it by compulsion and opposition. Or, if he means a headlong torrent for a tide, which would be ridiculous, yet they do not wind in volumes, but come foreright back, (if their upright lie straight to their former course,) and that by opposition of the sea-water, that drives them back again.

"And for fancy, when he lights of any thing like it, 'tis a wonder if it be not borrowed. As here, for example of, I find this fanciful thought in his Ann. Mirab.

"Old father Thames rais'd up his rev'rend head;
But fear'd the fate of Simoeis would return:
Deep in his ooze he sought his sedgy bed;
And shrunk his waters back into his urn.

"This is stolen from Cowley's Davideis, p. 9.

"Swift Jordan started, and strait backward fled,
Hiding amongst thick reeds his aged head.
And when the Spaniards their assault begin,
At once beat those without and those within.

"This Almanzor speaks of himself; and, sure, for one man to conquer an army within the city, and another without the city, at once, is something difficult; but this flight is pardonable to some we meet with in Granada: Osmin, speaking of Almanzor,

> "Who, like a tempest that outrides the wind,
> Made a just battle, ere the bodies join'd.

"Pray, what does this honorable person mean by a 'tempest that outrides the wind?' a tempest that outrides itself. To suppose a tempest without wind, is as bad as supposing a man to walk without feet; for if he supposes the tempest to be something distinct from the wind, yet, as being the effect of wind only, to come before the cause is a little preposterous; so that, if he takes it one way, or if he takes it the other, those two *ifs* will scarce make one *possibility.*" Enough of Settle.

Marriage à-la-mode, 1673, is a comedy dedicated to the earl of Rochester; whom he acknowledges not only as the defender of his poetry, but the promoter of his fortune. Langbaine places this play in 1673. The earl of Rochester, therefore, was the famous Wilmot, whom yet tradition always represents as an enemy to Dryden, and who is mentioned by him with some disrespect in the preface to Juvenal.

The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery, a comedy, 1673, was driven off the stage, "against the opinion," as the author says, "of the best judges." It is dedicated, in a very elegant address, to sir

Charles Sedley; in which he finds an opportunity for his usual complaint of hard treatment and unreasonable censure.

Amboyna, 1673, is a tissue of mingled dialogue in verse and prose, and was, perhaps, written in less time than the Virgin Martyr; though the author thought not fit, either ostentatiously or mournfully, to tell how little labour it cost him, or at how short a warning he produced it. It was a temporary performance, written in the time of the Dutch war, to inflame the nation against their enemies; to whom he hopes, as he declares in his epilogue, to make his poetry not less destructive than that by which Tyrtæus of old animated the Spartans. This play was written in the second Dutch war, in 1673.

Troilus and Cressida, 1679, is a play altered from Shakespeare; but so altered, that, even in Langbaine's opinion, "the last scene in the third act is a masterpiece." It is introduced by a discourse on the grounds of criticism in tragedy, to which I suspect that Rymer's book had given occasion.

The Spanish Fryar, 1681, is a tragicomedy, eminent for the happy coincidence and coalition of the two plots. As it was written against the papists, it would naturally, at that time, have friends and enemies; and partly by the popularity which it obtained at first, and partly by the real power both of the serious and risible part, it continued long a favourite of the publick.

It was Dryden's opinion, at least for some time,

and he maintains it in the dedication of this play, that the drama required an alternation of comick and tragick scenes; and that it is necessary to mitigate, by alleviations of merriment, the pressure of ponderous events, and the fatigue of toilsome passions. "Whoever," says he, "cannot perform both parts, is but half a writer for the stage."

The Duke of Guise, a tragedy, 1683, written in conjunction with Lee, as Œdipus had been before, seems to deserve notice only for the offence which it gave to the remnant of the covenanters, and in general to the enemies of the court, who attacked him with great violence, and were answered by him; though, at last, he seems to withdraw from the conflict, by transferring the greater part of the blame or merit to his partner. It happened that a contract had been made between them, by which they were to join in writing a play; and "he happened," says Dryden, "to claim the promise just upon the finishing of a poem, when I would have been glad of a little respite. *Two*-thirds of it belonged to him; and to me only the first scene of the play, the whole fourth act, and the first half, or somewhat more, of the fifth."

This was a play written professedly for the party of the duke of York, whose succession was then opposed. A parallel is intended between the leaguers of France, and the covenanters of England: and this intention produced the controversy.

Albion and Albanius, 1685, is a musical drama or opera, written, like the Duke of Guise, against the

republicans. With what success it was performed, I have not found[d].

The State of Innocence and Fall of Man, 1675, is termed, by him, an opera: it is rather a tragedy in heroick rhyme, but of which the personages are such as cannot decently be exhibited on the stage. Some such production was foreseen by Marvel, who writes thus to Milton:

> Or if a work so infinite be spann'd,
> Jealous I was, lest some less skilful hand
> (Such as disquiet always what is well,
> And by ill-imitating would excel,)
> Might hence presume the whole creation's day
> To change in scenes, and show it in a play.

It is another of his hasty productions; for the heat of his imagination raised it in a month.

This composition is addressed to the princess of Modena, then dutchess of York, in a strain of flattery which disgraces genius, and which it was wonderful that any man, that knew the meaning of his own words, could use without self-detestation. It is an attempt to mingle earth and heaven, by praising human excellence in the language of religion.

The preface contains an apology for heroick verse and poetick license; by which is meant not any liberty taken in contracting or extending words, but the use of bold fictions and ambitious figures.

The reason which he gives for printing what was

[d] Downes says it was performed on a very unlucky day, viz. that on which the duke of Monmouth landed in the west; and he intimates, that the consternation into which the kingdom was thrown by this event, was a reason why it was performed but six times, and was in general ill received. H.

never acted, cannot be overpassed: "I was induced to it in my own defence, many hundred copies of it being dispersed abroad without my knowledge or consent, and every one gathering new faults, it became, at length, a libel against me." These copies, as they gathered faults, were apparently manuscript; and he lived in an age very unlike ours, if many hundred copies of fourteen hundred lines were likely to be transcribed. An author has a right to print his own works, and needs not seek an apology in falsehood; but he that could bear to write the dedication, felt no pain in writing the preface.

Aureng Zebe, 1676, is a tragedy founded on the actions of a great prince then reigning, but over nations not likely to employ their criticks upon the transactions of the English stage. If he had known and disliked his own character, our trade was not in those times secure from his resentment. His country is at such a distance, that the manners might be safely falsified, and the incidents feigned; for remoteness of place is remarked, by Racine, to afford the same conveniencies to a poet as length of time.

This play is written in rhyme; and has the appearance of being the most elaborate of all the dramas. The personages are imperial; but the dialogue is often domestick, and, therefore, susceptible of sentiments accommodated to familiar incidents. The complaint of life is celebrated; and there are many other passages that may be read with pleasure.

This play is addressed to the earl of Mulgrave, afterwards duke of Buckingham, himself, if not a

poet, yet a writer of verses, and a critick. In this address Dryden gave the first hints of his intention to write an epick poem. He mentions his design in terms so obscure, that he seems afraid lest his plan should be purloined, as, he says, happened to him when he told it more plainly in his preface to Juvenal. "The design," says he, "you know is great, the story English, and neither too near the present times, nor too distant from them."

All for Love, or the World well Lost, 1678, a tragedy, founded upon the story of Antony and Cleopatra, he tells us, "is the only play which he wrote for himself:" the rest were given to the people. It is, by universal consent, accounted the work in which he has admitted the fewest improprieties of style or character; but it has one fault equal to many, though rather moral than critical, that, by admitting the romantick omnipotence of love, he has recommended as laudable, and worthy of imitation, that conduct which, through all ages, the good have censured as vitious, and the bad despised as foolish.

Of this play the prologue and the epilogue, though written upon the common topicks of malicious and ignorant criticism, and without any particular relation to the characters or incidents of the drama, are deservedly celebrated for their elegance and sprightliness.

Limberham, or the kind Keeper, 1680, is a comedy, which, after the third night, was prohibited as too indecent for the stage. What gave offence, was in the printing, as the author says, altered or omitted.

Dryden confesses that its indecency was objected to; but Langbaine, who yet seldom favours him, imputes its expulsion to resentment, because it "so much exposed the keeping part of the town."

Œdipus, 1679, is a tragedy formed by Dryden and Lee, in conjunction, from the works of Sophocles, Seneca, and Corneille. Dryden planned the scenes, and composed the first and third acts.

Don Sebastian, 1690, is commonly esteemed either the first or second of his dramatick performances. It is too long to be all acted, and has many characters and many incidents; and though it is not without sallies of frantick dignity, and more noise than meaning, yet, as it makes approaches to the possibilities of real life, and has some sentiments which leave a strong impression, it continued long to attract attention. Amidst the distresses of princes, and the vicissitudes of empire, are inserted several scenes which the writer intended for comick; but which, I suppose, that age did not much commend, and this would not endure. There are, however, passages of excellence universally acknowledged; the dispute and the reconciliation of Dorax and Sebastian has always been admired.

This play was first acted in 1690, after Dryden had for some years discontinued dramatick poetry.

Amphitryon is a comedy derived from Plautus and Molière. The dedication is dated Oct. 1690. This play seems to have succeeded at its first appearance; and was, I think, long considered as a very diverting entertainment.

Cleomenes, 1692, is a tragedy, only remarkable as it occasioned an incident related in the Guardian, and allusively mentioned by Dryden in his preface. As he came out from the representation, he was accosted thus by some airy stripling: "Had I been left alone with a young beauty, I would not have spent my time like your Spartan." "That sir," said Dryden, "perhaps, is true; but give me leave to tell you, that you are no hero."

King Arthur, 1691, is another opera. It was the last work that Dryden performed for king Charles, who did not live to see it exhibited; and it does not seem to have been ever brought upon the stage[e]. In the dedication to the marquis of Halifax, there is a very elegant character of Charles, and a pleasing account of his latter life. When this was first brought upon the stage, news that the duke of Monmouth had landed was told in the theatre; upon which the company departed, and Arthur was exhibited no more.

His last drama was Love Triumphant, a tragicomedy. In his dedication to the earl of Salisbury he mentions "the lowness of fortune to which he has voluntarily reduced himself, and of which he has no reason to be ashamed."

This play appeared in 1694. It is said to have been unsuccessful. The castastrophe, proceeding merely from a change of mind, is confessed by the author to be defective. Thus he began and ended his dramatick labours with ill success.

[e] This is a mistake. It was set to musick by Purcell, and well received, and is yet a favourite entertainment. H.

From such a number of theatrical pieces, it will be supposed, by most readers, that he must have improved his fortune; at least, that such diligence, with such abilities, must have set penury at defiance. But in Dryden's time the drama was very far from that universal approbation which it has now obtained. The playhouse was abhorred by the puritans, and avoided by those who desired the character of seriousness or decency. A grave lawyer would have debased his dignity, and a young trader would have impaired his credit, by appearing in those mansions of dissolute licentiousness. The profits of the theatre, when so many classes of the people were deducted from the audience, were not great; and the poet had, for a long time, but a single night. The first that had two nights was Southern; and the first that had three was Rowe. There were, however, in those days, arts of improving a poet's profit, which Dryden forbore to practise; and a play, therefore, seldom produced him more than a hundred pounds, by the accumulated gain of the third night, the dedication, and the copy.

Almost every piece had a dedication, written with such elegance and luxuriance of praise, as neither haughtiness nor avarice could be imagined able to resist. But he seems to have made flattery too cheap. That praise is worth nothing of which the price is known.

To increase the value of his copies, he often accompanied his work with a preface of criticism; a kind of learning then almost new in the English

language, and which he, who had considered, with great accuracy, the principles of writing, was able to distribute copiously as occasions arose. By these dissertations the publick judgment must have been much improved; and Swift, who conversed with Dryden, relates that he regretted the success of his own instructions, and found his readers made suddenly too skilful to be easily satisfied.

His prologues had such reputation, that for some time a play was considered as less likely to be well received, if some of his verses did not introduce it. The price of a prologue was two guineas, till, being asked to write one for Mr. Southern, he demanded three: "Not," said he, "young man, out of disrespect to you; but the players have had my goods too cheap[f]."

Though he declares, that in his own opinion, his genius was not dramatick, he had great confidence in his own fertility; for he is said to have engaged, by contract, to furnish four plays a year.

It is certain, that in one year, 1678[g], he published All for Love, Assignation, two parts of the Conquest of Granada, sir Martin Mar-all, and the State of Innocence, six complete plays; with a celerity of performance, which, though all Langbaine's charges

[f] Johnson has here quoted from memory. Warburton is the original relater of this anecdote, who says he had it from Southern himself. According to him, Dryden's usual price had been *four* guineas, and he made Southern pay *six*. In the edition of Southern's plays, 1774, we have a different deviation from the truth, *five* and *ten* guineas. M.

[g] Dr. Johnson, in this assertion, was misled by Langbaine. Only one of these plays appeared in 1678. Nor were there more than three in any one year. The dates are now added from the original editions. R.

of plagiarism should be allowed, shows such facility of composition, such readiness of language, and such copiousness of sentiment, as, since the time of Lopez de Vega, perhaps no other author has possessed.

He did not enjoy his reputation, however great, nor his profits, however small, without molestation. He had criticks to endure, and rivals to oppose. The two most distinguished wits of the nobility, the duke of Buckingham and earl of Rochester, declared themselves his enemies.

Buckingham characterized him, in 1671, by the name of Bayes, in the Rehearsal; a farce which he is said to have written with the assistance of Butler, the author of Hudibras; Martin Clifford, of the Charter-house; and Dr. Sprat, the friend of Cowley, then his chaplain. Dryden and his friends laughed at the length of time, and the number of hands, employed upon this performance; in which, though by some artifice of action it yet keeps possession of the stage, it is not possible now to find any thing that might not have been written without so long delay, or a confederacy so numerous.

To adjust the minute events of literary history, is tedious and troublesome; it requires, indeed, no great force of understanding, but often depends upon inquiries which there is no opportunity of making, or is to be fetched from books and pamphlets not always at hand.

The Rehearsal was played in 1671[h], and yet is represented as ridiculing passages in the Conquest

[h] It was published in 1672. R.

of Granada and Assignation, which were not published till 1678; in Marriage à-la-mode, published in 1673; and in Tyrannick Love, in 1677. These contradictions show how rashly satire is applied[1].

It is said that this farce was originally intended against Davenant, who, in the first draught, was characterized by the name of Bilboa. Davenant had been a soldier and an adventurer.

There is one passage in the Rehearsal still remaining, which seems to have related originally to Davenant. Bayes hurts his nose, and comes in with brown paper applied to the bruise; how this affected Dryden, does not appear. Davenant's nose had suffered such diminution by mishaps among the women, that a patch upon that part evidently denoted him.

It is said, likewise, that sir Robert Howard was once meant. The design was, probably, to ridicule the reigning poet, whoever he might be.

Much of the personal satire, to which it might owe its first reception, is now lost or obscured. Bayes, probably, imitated the dress, and mimicked the manner, of Dryden: the cant words which are so often in his mouth may be supposed to have been Dryden's habitual phrases, or customary exclamations. Bayes, when he is to write, is blooded and

[1] This remark, as Mr. Malone observes, is founded upon the erroneous dates with which Johnson was supplied by Langbaine. The Rehearsal was played in 1671, but not published till the next year; The Wild Gallant was printed in 1669, The Maiden Queen in 1668, Tyrannick Love in 1670; the two parts of Granada were performed in 1669 and 1670, though not printed till 1672. Additions were afterwards made to The Rehearsal, and among these are the parodies on Assignation, which are not to be found in Buckingham's play as it originally appeared. Mr. Malone denies that there is any allusion to Marriage à-la-mode. See Malone, p. 100. J. B.

purged: this, as Lamotte relates himself to have heard, was the real practice of the poet.

There were other strokes in the Rehearsal by which malice was gratified: the debate between love and honour, which keeps prince Volscius in a single boot, is said to have alluded to the misconduct of the duke of Ormond, who lost Dublin to the rebels, while he was toying with a mistress.

The earl of Rochester, to suppress the reputation of Dryden, took Settle into his protection, and endeavoured to persuade the publick that its approbation had been to that time misplaced. Settle was awhile in high reputation: his Empress of Morocco, having first delighted the town, was carried in triumph to Whitehall, and played by the ladies of the court. Now was the poetical meteor at the highest: the next moment began its fall. Rochester withdrew his patronage; seeming resolved, says one of his biographers, "to have a judgment contrary to that of the town;" perhaps being unable to endure any reputation beyond a certain height, even when he had himself contributed to raise it.

Neither criticks nor rivals did Dryden much mischief, unless they gained from his own temper the power of vexing him, which his frequent bursts of resentment give reason to suspect. He is always angry at some past, or afraid of some future censure; but he lessens the smart of his wounds by the balm of his own approbation, and endeavours to repel the shafts of criticism by opposing a shield of adamantine confidence.

The perpetual accusation produced against him, was that of plagiarism, against which he never attempted any vigorous defence; for, though he was, perhaps, sometimes injuriously censured, he would, by denying part of the charge, have confessed the rest; and, as his adversaries had the proof in their own hands, he, who knew that wit had little power against facts, wisely left in that perplexity which generality produces a question which it was his interest to suppress, and which, unless provoked by vindication, few were likely to examine.

Though the life of a writer, from about thirty-five to sixty-three, may be supposed to have been sufficiently busied by the composition of eight-and-twenty pieces for the stage, Dryden found room in the same space for many other undertakings.

But, how much soever he wrote, he was at least once suspected of writing more; for, in 1679, a paper of verses, called an Essay on Satire, was shown about in manuscript; by which the earl of Rochester, the dutchess of Portsmouth, and others, were so much provoked, that, as was supposed, (for the actors were never discovered,) they procured Dryden, whom they suspected as the author, to be waylaid and beaten. This incident is mentioned by the duke of Buckinghamshire[j], the true writer, in his Art of Poetry; where he says of Dryden:

> Though prais'd and beaten for another's rhymes,
> His own deserve as great applause sometimes.

His reputation in time was such, that his name

[j] It is mentioned by A. Wood, Athen. Oxon. vol. ii. p. 804. 2nd ed. C.

was thought necessary to the success of every poetical or literary performance, and, therefore, he was engaged to contribute something, whatever it might be, to many publications. He prefixed the Life of Polybius to the translation of sir Henry Sheers; and those of Lucian and Plutarch, to versions of their works by different hands. Of the English Tacitus he translated the first book; and, if Gordon be credited, translated it from the French. Such a charge can hardly be mentioned without some degree of indignation; but it is not, I suppose, so much to be inferred, that Dryden wanted the literature necessary to the perusal of Tacitus, as that, considering himself as hidden in a crowd, he had no awe of the publick; and, writing merely for money, was contented to get it by the nearest way.

In 1680, the Epistles of Ovid being translated by the poets of the time, among which one was the work of Dryden[k], and another of Dryden and lord Mulgrave, it was necessary to introduce them by a preface; and Dryden, who on such occasions was regularly summoned, prefixed a discourse upon translation, which was then struggling for the liberty that it now enjoys. Why it should find any difficulty in breaking the shackles of verbal interpretation, which must for ever debar it from elegance, it would be difficult to conjecture, were not the power of prejudice every day observed. The authority of Jonson,

[k] Dryden translated two entire epistles, Canace to Macareus, and Dido to Æneas. Helen to Paris was translated by him and lord Mulgrave. Malone. J. B.

Sandys, and Holiday, had fixed the judgment of the nation; and it was not easily believed that a better way could be found than they had taken, though Fanshaw, Denham, Waller, and Cowley, had tried to give examples of a different practice.

In 1681 Dryden became yet more conspicuous by uniting politicks with poetry, in the memorable satire, called Absalom and Achitophel, written against the faction which, by lord Shaftesbury's incitement, set the duke of Monmouth at its head.

Of this poem, in which personal satire was applied to the support of publick principles, and in which, therefore, every mind was interested, the reception was eager, and the sale so large, that my father, an old bookseller, told me, he had not known it equalled but by Sacheverell's Trial.

The reason of this general perusal Addison has attempted to derive from the delight which the mind feels in the investigation of secrets; and thinks that curiosity to decipher the names, procured readers to the poem. There is no need to inquire why those verses were read, which, to all the attractions of wit, elegance, and harmony, added the cooperation of all the factious passions, and filled every mind with triumph or resentment.

It could not be supposed that all the provocation given by Dryden, would be endured without resistance or reply. Both his person and his party were exposed, in their turns, to the shafts of satire, which, though neither so well pointed, nor, perhaps, so well aimed, undoubtedly drew blood.

One of these poems is called, Dryden's Satire on his Muse; ascribed, though, as Pope says, falsely, to Somers, who was afterwards chancellor. The poem, whosesoever it was, has much virulence, and some sprightliness. The writer tells all the ill that he can collect both of Dryden and his friends.

The poem of Absalom and Achitophel had two answers, now both forgotten; one called Azaria and Hushai; the other, Absalom senior. Of these hostile compositions, Dryden apparently imputes Absalom senior to Settle, by quoting in his verses against him the second line. Azaria and Hushai was, as Wood says, imputed to him, though it is somewhat unlikely that he should write twice on the same occasion. This is a difficulty which I cannot remove, for want of a minuter knowledge of poetical transactions[1].

The same year he published The Medal, of which the subject is a medal struck on lord Shaftesbury's escape from a prosecution, by the *ignoramus* of a grand jury of Londoners.

In both poems he maintains the same principles, and saw them both attacked by the same antagonist. Elkanah Settle, who had answered Absalom, appeared with equal courage in opposition to The Medal, and published an answer called, The Medal Reversed, with so much success in both encounters, that he left the palm doubtful, and divided the suffrages of the nation. Such are the revolutions of fame, or such is the prevalence of fashion, that the

[1] Azaria and Hushai was written by Samuel Pordage, a dramatick writer of that time.

man, whose works have not yet been thought to deserve the care of collecting them, who died forgotten in an hospital, and whose latter years were spent in contriving shows for fairs, and carrying an elegy or epithalamium, of which the beginning and end were occasionally varied, but the intermediate parts were always the same, to every house where there was a funeral or a wedding, might with truth have had inscribed upon his stone:

Here lies the rival and antagonist of Dryden.

Settle was, for this rebellion, severely chastised by Dryden, under the name of Doeg, in the second part of Absalom and Achitophel; and was, perhaps, for his factious audacity, made the city poet, whose annual office was to describe the glories of the mayor's day. Of these bards he was the last, and seems not much to have deserved even this degree of regard, if it was paid to his political opinions; for he afterwards wrote a panegyrick on the virtues of judge Jefferies; and what more could have been done by the meanest zealot for prerogative?

Of translated fragments, or occasional poems, to enumerate the titles, or settle the dates, would be tedious, with little use. It may be observed, that, as Dryden's genius was commonly excited by some personal regard, he rarely writes upon a general topick.

Soon after the accession of king James, when the design of reconciling the nation to the church of Rome became apparent, and the religion of the court gave the only efficacious title to its favours, Dryden

declared himself a convert to popery. This, at any other time, might have passed with little censure. Sir Kenelm Digby embraced popery; the two Reynolds's reciprocally converted one another[m]; and Chillingworth himself was awhile so entangled in the wilds of controversy, as to retire for quiet to an infallible church. If men of argument and study can find such difficulties, or such motives, as may either unite them to the church of Rome, or detain them in uncertainty, there can be no wonder that a man, who, perhaps, never inquired why he was a protestant, should, by an artful and experienced disputant, be made a papist, overborne by the sudden violence of new and unexpected arguments, or deceived by a representation which shows only the doubts on one part, and only the evidence on the other.

That conversion will always be suspected that apparently concurs with interest. He that never finds his errour till it hinders his progress toward wealth or honour, will not be thought to love truth only for herself. Yet it may easily happen that information may come at a commodious time; and, as truth and interest are not by any fatal necessity at variance, that one may by accident introduce the other. When opinions are struggling into popularity, the arguments by which they are opposed or defended become more known; and he that changes his profession would, perhaps, have changed it before, with

[m] Dr. John Reynolds, who lived temp. Jac. I. was at first a zealous papist, and his brother William as earnest a protestant; but by mutual disputation each converted the other. See Fuller's Church History, p. 47. book x. H.

the like opportunities of instruction. This was then the state of popery; every artifice was used to show it in its fairest form; and it must be owned to be a religion of external appearance sufficiently attractive.

It is natural to hope that a comprehensive is, likewise, an elevated soul, and that whoever is wise is also honest. I am willing to believe that Dryden, having employed his mind, active as it was, upon different studies, and filled it, capacious as it was, with other materials, came unprovided to the controversy, and wanted rather skill to discover the right, than virtue to maintain it. But inquiries into the heart are not for man; we must now leave him to his judge.

The priests, having strengthened their cause by so powerful an adherent, were not long before they brought him into action. They engaged him to defend the controversial papers found in the strong box of Charles the second; and yet, what was harder, to defend them against Stillingfleet.

With hopes of promoting popery, he was employed to translate Maimbourg's History of the League; which he published with a large introduction. His name is, likewise, prefixed to the English Life of Francis Xavier; but I know not that he ever owned himself the translator. Perhaps the use of his name was a pious fraud, which, however, seems not to have had much effect; for neither of the books, I believe, was ever popular.

The version of Xavier's Life is commended by Brown, in a pamphlet not written to flatter; and

the occasion of it is said to have been, that the queen, when she solicited a son, made vows to him as her tutelary saint.

He was supposed to have undertaken to translate Varillas's History of Heresies; and, when Burnet published remarks upon it, to have written an answer[n]; upon which Burnet makes the following observation:

"I have been informed from England, that a gentleman, who is famous both for poetry and several other things, had spent three months in translating M. Varillas's History; but that, as soon as my Reflections appeared, he discontinued his labour, finding the credit of his author was gone. Now, if he thinks it is recovered by his answer, he will, perhaps, go on with his translation; and this may be, for aught I know, as good an entertainment for him as the conversation that he had set on between the Hinds and Panthers, and all the rest of animals, for whom M. Varillas may serve well enough as an author: and this history, and that poem, are such extraordinary things of their kind, that it will be but suitable to see the author of the worst poem become, likewise, the translator of the worst history that the age has produced. If his grace and his wit improve both proportionably, he will hardly find that he has gained much by the change he has made, from having no religion, to choose one of the worst. It is true, he had somewhat to sink from in matter of wit; but, as for his morals, it is

[n] This is a mistake. See Malone, p. 194, &c.

scarce possible for him to grow a worse man than he was. He has lately wreaked his malice on me for spoiling his three months' labour; but in it he has done me all the honour that any man can receive from him, which is to be railed at by him. If I had ill-nature enough to prompt me to wish a very bad wish for him, it should be, that he would go on and finish his translation. By that it will appear, whether the English nation, which is the most competent judge in this matter, has, upon the seeing our debate, pronounced in M. Varillas's favour, or in mine. It is true, Mr. D. will suffer a little by it; but, at least, it will serve to keep him in from other extravagancies; and if he gains little honour by this work, yet he cannot lose so much by it as he has done by his last employment."

Having, probably, felt his own inferiority in theological controversy, he was desirous of trying whether, by bringing poetry to aid his arguments, he might become a more efficacious defender of his new profession. To reason in verse was, indeed, one of his powers; but subtilty and harmony, united, are still feeble, when opposed to truth.

Actuated, therefore, by zeal for Rome, or hope of fame, he published The Hind and Panther, a poem in which the church of Rome, figured by the *milk-white hind*, defends her tenets against the church of England, represented by the *panther*, a beast beautiful, but spotted.

A fable which exhibits two beasts talking theology, appears, at once, full of absurdity; and it was ac-

cordingly ridiculed in the City Mouse and Country Mouse, a parody, written by Montague, afterwards earl of Halifax, and Prior, who then gave the first specimen of his abilities.

The conversion of such a man, at such a time, was not likely to pass uncensured. Three dialogues were published by the facetious Thomas Brown, of which the two first were called Reasons of Mr. Bayes's changing his Religion; and the third, The Reasons of Mr. Hains the Player's Conversion and Reconversion. The first was printed in 1688, the second not till 1690, the third in 1691. The clamour seems to have been long continued, and the subject to have strongly fixed the publick attention.

In the two first dialogues Bayes is brought into the company of Crites and Eugenius, with whom he had formerly debated on dramatick poetry. The two talkers in the third are Mr. Bayes and Mr. Hains.

Brown was a man not deficient in literature, nor destitute of fancy; but he seems to have thought it the pinnacle of excellence to be a *merry fellow;* and, therefore, laid out his powers upon small jests or gross buffoonery; so that his performances have little intrinsick value, and were read only while they were recommended by the novelty of the event that occasioned them.

These dialogues are like his other works: what sense or knowledge they contain is disgraced by the garb in which it is exhibited. One great source of pleasure is to call Dryden "little Bayes." Ajax, who happens to be mentioned, is "he that wore as

many cow-hides upon his shield as would have furnished half the king's army with shoe-leather."

Being asked whether he had seen the Hind and Panther, Crites answers: "Seen it! Mr. Bayes, why I can stir nowhere but it pursues me; it haunts me worse than a pewter-buttoned serjeant does a decayed cit. Sometimes I meet it in a bandbox, when my laundress brings home my linen; sometimes, whether I will or no, it lights my pipe at a coffee-house; sometimes it surprises me in a trunkmaker's shop; and sometimes it refreshes my memory for me on the backside of a Chancery lane parcel. For your comfort too, Mr. Bayes, I have not only seen it, as you may perceive, but have read it too, and can quote it as freely upon occasion as a frugal tradesman can quote that noble treatise The Worth of a Penny, to his extravagant 'prentice, that revels in stewed apples and penny custards."

The whole animation of these compositions arises from a profusion of ludicrous and affected comparisons. "To secure one's chastity," says Bayes, "little more is necessary than to leave off a correspondence with the other sex, which, to a wise man, is no greater a punishment than it would be to a fanatick parson to be forbid seeing The Cheats and The Committee; or for my lord mayor and aldermen to be interdicted the sight of The London Cuckold." This is the general strain, and, therefore, I shall be easily excused the labour of more transcription.

Brown does not wholly forget past transactions:

"You began," says Crites to Bayes, "with a very indifferent religion, and have not mended the matter in your last choice. It was but reason that your muse, which appeared first in a tyrant's quarrel, should employ her last efforts to justify the usurpations of the hind."

Next year the nation was summoned to celebrate the birth of the prince. Now was the time for Dryden to rouse his imagination, and strain his voice. Happy days were at hand, and he was willing to enjoy and diffuse the anticipated blessings. He published a poem, filled with predictions of greatness and prosperity; predictions of which it is not necessary to tell how they have been verified.

A few months passed after these joyful notes, and every blossom of popish hope was blasted for ever by the revolution. A papist now could be no longer laureate. The revenue, which he had enjoyed with so much pride and praise, was transferred to Shadwell, an old enemy, whom he had formerly stigmatised by the name of Og. Dryden could not decently complain that he was deposed; but seemed very angry that Shadwell succeeded him, and has, therefore, celebrated the intruder's inauguration in a poem exquisitely satirical, called Mac Flecknoe°; of which the Dunciad, as Pope himself declares, is an imitation, though more extended in its plan, and more diversified in its incidents.

° All Dryden's biographers have misdated this poem, which Mr. Malone's more accurate researches prove to have been published on the 4th of Oct. 1682.

It is related by Prior, that lord Dorset, when, as chamberlain, he was constrained to eject Dryden from his office, gave him, from his own purse, an allowance equal to the salary. This is no romantick or incredible act of generosity; a hundred a year is often enough given to claims less cogent, by men less famed for liberality. Yet Dryden always represented himself as suffering under a publick infliction; and once particularly demands respect for the patience with which he endured the loss of his little fortune. His patron might, indeed, enjoin him to suppress his bounty; but, if he suffered nothing, he should not have complained.

During the short reign of king James, he had written nothing for the stage[p], being, in his opinion, more profitably employed in controversy and flattery. Of praise he might, perhaps, have been less lavish without inconvenience, for James was never said to have much regard for poetry: he was to be flattered only by adopting his religion.

Times were now changed: Dryden was no longer the court-poet, and was to look back for support to his former trade; and having waited about two years, either considering himself as discountenanced by the publick, perhaps expecting a second revolution, he produced Don Sebastian in 1690; and in the next four years four dramas more.

In 1693 appeared a new version of Juvenal and Persius. Of Juvenal, he translated the first, third, sixth, tenth, and sixteenth satires; and of Persius,

[p] Albion and Albanius must, however, be excepted. R.

the whole work. On this occasion, he introduced his two sons to the publick, as nurslings of the muses. The fourteenth of Juvenal was the work of John, and the seventh of Charles Dryden. He prefixed a very ample preface, in the form of a dedication to lord Dorset; and there gives an account of the design which he had once formed to write an epick poem on the actions either of Arthur or the Black Prince. He considered the epick as necessarily including some kind of supernatural agency, and had imagined a new kind of contest between the guardian angels of kingdoms, of whom he conceived that each might be represented zealous for his charge, without any intended opposition to the purposes of the supreme being, of which all created minds must in part be ignorant.

This is the most reasonable scheme of celestial interposition that ever was formed. The surprises and terrours of enchantments, which have succeeded to the intrigues and oppositions of pagan deities, afford very striking scenes, and open a vast extent to the imagination; but, as Boileau observes, (and Boileau will be seldom found mistaken,) with this incurable defect, that, in a contest between heaven and hell, we know at the beginning which is to prevail; for this reason we follow Rinaldo to the enchanted wood with more curiosity than terrour.

In the scheme of Dryden there is one great difficulty, which yet he would, perhaps, have had address enough to surmount. In a war, justice can be but on one side; and, to entitle the hero to the

protection of angels, he must fight in the defence of indubitable right. Yet some of the celestial beings, thus opposed to each other, must have been represented as defending guilt.

That this poem was never written, is reasonably to be lamented. It would, doubtless, have improved our numbers, and enlarged our language; and might, perhaps, have contributed, by pleasing instruction, to rectify our opinions, and purify our manners.

What he required as the indispensable condition of such an undertaking, a publick stipend, was not likely, in those times, to be obtained. Riches were not become familiar to us; nor had the nation yet learned to be liberal.

This plan he charged Blackmore with stealing; "only," says he, "the guardian angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage."

In 1694, he began the most laborious and difficult of all his works, the translation of Virgil; from which he borrowed two months, that he might turn Fresnoy's Art of Painting into English prose. The preface, which he boasts to have written in twelve mornings, exhibits a parallel of poetry and painting, with a miscellaneous collection of critical remarks, such as cost a mind, stored like his, no labour to produce them.

In 1697, he published his version of the works of Virgil; and, that no opportunity of profit might be lost, dedicated the Pastorals to the lord Clifford, the Georgicks to the earl of Chesterfield, and the Æneid to the earl of Mulgrave. This economy of

flattery, at once lavish and discreet, did not pass without observation.

This translation was censured by Milbourne, a clergyman, styled, by Pope, "the fairest of criticks," because he exhibited his own version to be compared with that which he condemned.

His last work was his Fables, published in 1699, in consequence, as is supposed, of a contract now in the hands of Mr. Tonson; by which he obliged himself, in consideration of three hundred pounds, to finish for the press ten thousand verses.

In this volume is comprised the well-known ode on St. Cecilia's day, which, as appeared by a letter communicated to Dr. Birch, he spent a fortnight in composing and correcting. But what is this to the patience and diligence of Boileau, whose Equivoque, a poem of only three hundred and forty-six lines, took from his life eleven months to write it, and three years to revise it?

Part of this book of Fables is the first Iliad in English, intended as a specimen of a version of the whole. Considering into what hands Homer was to fall, the reader cannot but rejoice that this project went no further.

The time was now at hand which was to put an end to all his schemes and labours. On the first of May, 1701, having been some time, as he tells us, a cripple in his limbs, he died, in Gerard street, of a mortification in his leg.

There is extant a wild story relating to some vexatious events that happened at his funeral, which,

at the end of Congreve's Life, by a writer of I know not what credit, are thus related, as I find the account transferred to a biographical dictionary[q].

"Mr. Dryden dying on the Wednesday morning, Dr. Thomas Sprat, then bishop of Rochester and dean of Westminster, sent the next day to the lady Elizabeth Howard, Mr. Dryden's widow, that he would make a present of the ground, which was forty pounds, with all the other abbey fees. The lord Halifax, likewise, sent to the lady Elizabeth, and Mr. Charles Dryden her son, that, if they would give him leave to bury Mr. Dryden, he would inter him with a gentleman's private funeral, and afterwards bestow five hundred pounds on a monument in the abbey; which, as they had no reason to refuse, they accepted. On the Saturday following the company came: the corpse was put into a velvet hearse; and eighteen mourning coaches, filled with company, attended. When they were just ready to move, the lord Jefferies, son of the lord chancellor Jefferies, with some of his rakish companions, coming by, asked whose funeral it was; and, being told Mr. Dryden's, he said, 'What, shall Dryden, the greatest honour and ornament of the nation, be buried after this private manner! No, gentlemen, let all that loved Mr. Dryden, and honour his memory, alight and join with me in gaining my lady's consent to let me have the honour of his interment, which shall be after another manner than this; and I will

[q] This story has been traced to its source, and clearly proved to be a fabrication, by Mr. Malone. See Malone's Life, 347.

bestow a thousand pounds on a monument in the abbey for him.' The gentlemen in the coaches, not knowing of the bishop of Rochester's favour, nor of the lord Halifax's generous design, (they both having, out of respect to the family, enjoined the lady Elizabeth and her son to keep their favour concealed to the world, and let it pass for their own expense,) readily came out of the coaches, and attended lord Jefferies up to the lady's bedside, who was then sick. He repeated the purport of what he had before said; but she absolutely refusing, he fell on his knees, vowing never to rise till his request was granted. The rest of the company, by his desire, kneeled also; and the lady, being under a sudden surprise, fainted away. As soon as she recovered her speech, she cried, 'No, no.' 'Enough, gentlemen,' replied he; 'my lady is very good; she says, Go, go.' She repeated her former words with all her strength, but in vain, for her feeble voice was lost in their acclamations of joy; and the lord Jefferies ordered the horsemen to carry the corpse to Mr. Russell's, an undertaker in Cheapside, and leave it there till he should send orders for the embalment, which, he added, should be after the royal manner. His directions were obeyed, the company dispersed, and lady Elizabeth and her son remained inconsolable. The next day Mr. Charles Dryden waited on the lord Halifax and the bishop, to excuse his mother and himself, by relating the real truth. But neither his lordship nor the bishop would admit of any plea; especially the latter, who had the abbey lighted, the ground

opened, the choir attending, an anthem ready set, and himself waiting, for some time, without any corpse to bury. The undertaker, after three days' expectance of orders for embalment without receiving any, waited on the lord Jefferies; who, pretending ignorance of the matter, turned it off with an ill-natured jest, saying, that those who observed the orders of a drunken frolick deserved no better; that he remembered nothing at all of it; and that he might do what he pleased with the corpse. Upon this, the undertaker waited upon the lady Elizabeth and her son, and threatened to bring the corpse home, and set it before the door. They desired a day's respite, which was granted. Mr. Charles Dryden wrote a handsome letter to the lord Jefferies, who returned it with this cool answer: 'that he knew nothing of the matter, and would be troubled no more about it.' He then addressed the lord Halifax and the bishop of Rochester, who absolutely refused to do any thing in it. In this distress Dr. Garth sent for the corpse to the College of Physicians, and proposed a funeral by subscription, to which himself set a most noble example. At last, a day, about three weeks after Mr. Dryden's decease, was appointed for the interment. Dr. Garth pronounced a fine Latin oration, at the college, over the corpse; which was attended to the abbey by a numerous train of coaches. When the funeral was over, Mr. Charles Dryden sent a challenge to the lord Jefferies, who refusing to answer it, he sent several others, and went often himself; but could neither get a letter

delivered, nor admittance to speak to him: which so incensed him, that he resolved, since his lordship refused to answer him like a gentleman, that he would watch an opportunity to meet and fight off-hand, though with all the rules of honour; which his lordship hearing, left the town; and Mr. Charles Dryden could never have the satisfaction of meeting him, though he sought it till his death with the utmost application."

This story I once intended to omit, as it appears with no great evidence; nor have I met with any confirmation, but in a letter of Farquhar; and he only relates that the funeral of Dryden was tumultuary and confused[r].

Supposing the story true, we may remark, that the gradual change of manners, though imperceptible in the process, appears great, when different times, and those not very distant, are compared. If, at this time, a young drunken lord should interrupt the pompous regularity of a magnificent funeral, what would be the event, but that he would be justled out of the way, and compelled to be quiet? If he should thrust himself into a house, he would

[r] An earlier account of Dryden's funeral than that above cited, though without the circumstances that preceded it, is given by Edward Ward, who, in his London Spy, published in 1706, relates, that on the occasion there was a performance of solemn musick at the college, and that at the procession, which himself saw, standing at the end of Chancery lane, Fleet street, there was a concert of hautboys and trumpets. The day of Dryden's interment, he says, was Monday, the 13th of May, which, according to Johnson, was twelve days after his decease, and shows how long his funeral was in suspense. Ward knew not that the expense of it was defrayed by subscription; but compliments lord Jefferies for so pious an undertaking. He also says, that the cause of Dryden's death was an inflammation in his toe, occasioned by the flesh growing over the nail, which, being neglected, produced a mortification in his leg. H.

be sent roughly away; and, what is yet more to the honour of the present time, I believe that those who had subscribed to the funeral of a man like Dryden, would not, for such an accident, have withdrawn their contributions[s].

He was buried among the poets in Westminster Abbey, where, though the duke of Newcastle had, in a general dedication prefixed by Congreve to his dramatick works, accepted thanks for his intention of erecting him a monument, he lay long without distinction, till the duke of Buckinghamshire gave him a tablet, inscribed only with the name of DRYDEN.

He married the lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the earl of Berkshire, with circumstances, according to the satire imputed to lord Somers, not very honourable to either party: by her he had three sons, Charles, John, and Henry. Charles was usher of the palace to pope Clement the eleventh; and, visiting England in 1704, was drowned in an attempt to swim across the Thames at Windsor.

John was author of a comedy called The Husband his own Cuckold. He is said to have died at Rome. Henry entered into some religious order. It is some proof of Dryden's sincerity in his second religion,

[s] In the register of the College of Physicians, is the following entry: "May 3, 1700. Comitiis Censoriis ordinariis. At the request of several persons of quality, that Mr. Dryden might be carried from the College of Physicians to be interred at Westminster, it was unanimously granted by the president and censors."

This entry is not calculated to afford any credit to the narrative concerning lord Jefferies. R.

that he taught it to his sons. A man conscious of hypocritical profession in himself, is not likely to convert others; and, as his sons were qualified, in 1693, to appear among the translators of Juvenal, they must have been taught some religion before their father's change.

Of the person of Dryden I know not any account; of his mind, the portrait which has been left by Congreve, who knew him with great familiarity, is such as adds our love of his manners to our admiration of his genius. "He was," we are told, "of a nature exceedingly humane and compassionate, ready to forgive injuries, and capable of a sincere reconciliation with those who had offended him. His friendship, where he professed it, went beyond his professions. He was of a very easy, of very pleasing, access; but somewhat slow, and, as it were, diffident in his advances to others: he had that in his nature which abhorred intrusion into any society whatever. He was, therefore, less known, and consequently his character became more liable to misapprehensions and misrep resentations: he was very modest, and very easily to be discountenanced in his approaches to his equals or superiours. As his reading had been very extensive, so was he very happy in a memory tenacious of every thing that he had read. He was not more possessed of knowledge than he was communicative of it; but then his communication was by no means pedantick, or imposed upon the conversation, but just such, and went so far as, by the natural turn of the conversation in which he was engaged, it

was necessarily promoted or required. He was extremely ready and gentle in his correction of the errours of any writer who thought fit to consult him, and full as ready and patient to admit of the reprehensions of others, in respect of his own oversights or mistakes."

To this account of Congreve nothing can be objected but the fondness of friendship; and to have excited that fondness in such a mind is no small degree of praise. The disposition of Dryden, however, is shown in this character rather as it exhibited itself in cursory conversation, than as it operated on the more important parts of life. His placability and his friendship, indeed, were solid virtues; but courtesy and good humour are often found with little real worth. Since Congreve, who knew him well, has told us no more, the rest must be collected, as it can, from other testimonies, and particularly from those notices which Dryden has very liberally given us of himself.

The modesty which made him so slow to advance, and so easy to be repulsed, was certainly no suspicion of deficient merit, or unconsciousness of his own value: he appears to have known, in its whole extent, the dignity of his character, and to have set a very high value on his own powers and performances. He probably did not offer his conversation, because he expected it to be solicited; and he retired from a cold reception, not submissive but indignant, with such reverence of his own greatness as made him unwilling to expose it to neglect or violation.

His modesty was by no means inconsistent with ostentatiousness: he is diligent enough to remind the world of his merit, and expresses, with very little scruple, his high opinion of his own powers; but his self-commendations are read without scorn or indignation; we allow his claims, and love his frankness.

Tradition, however, has not allowed that his confidence in himself exempted him from jealousy of others. He is accused of envy and insidiousness; and is particularly charged with inciting Creech to translate Horace, that he might lose the reputation which Lucretius had given him.

Of this charge we immediately discover that it is merely conjectural; the purpose was such as no man would confess; and a crime that admits no proof, why should we believe?

He has been described as magisterially presiding over the younger writers, and assuming the distribution of poetical fame; but he who excels has a right to teach, and he whose judgment is incontestable, may, without usurpation, examine and decide.

Congreve represents him as ready to advise and instruct; but there is reason to believe that his communication was rather useful than entertaining. He declares of himself that he was saturnine, and not one of those whose sprightly sayings diverted company; and one of his censurers makes him say:

> Nor wine nor love could ever see me gay;
> To writing bred, I knew not what to say [t].

[t] See what is said on this head with regard to Cowley and Addison, in their respective lives.

There are men whose powers operate only at leisure and in retirement, and whose intellectual vigour deserts them in conversation; whom merriment confuses, and objection disconcerts; whose bashfulness restrains their exertion, and suffers them not to speak till the time of speaking is past; or whose attention to their own character makes them unwilling to utter at hazard what has not been considered, and cannot be recalled.

Of Dryden's sluggishness in conversation it is vain to search or to guess the cause. He certainly wanted neither sentiments nor language; his intellectual treasures were great, though they were locked up from his own use. "His thoughts," when he wrote, "flowed in upon him so fast, that his only care was which to choose, and which to reject." Such rapidity of composition naturally promises a flow of talk; yet we must be content to believe what an enemy says of him, when he, likewise, says it of himself. But, whatever was his character as a companion, it appears that he lived in familiarity with the highest persons of his time. It is related by Carte of the duke of Ormond, that he used often to pass a night with Dryden, and those with whom Dryden consorted: who they were Carte has not told; but certainly the convivial table at which Ormond sat was not surrounded with a plebeian society. He was, indeed, reproached with boasting of his familiarity with the great; and Horace will support him in the opinion, that to please superiours is not the lowest kind of merit.

The merit of pleasing must, however, be estimated by the means. Favour is not always gained by good actions or laudable qualities. Caresses and preferments are often bestowed on the auxiliaries of vice, the procurers of pleasure, or the flatterers of vanity. Dryden has never been charged with any personal agency unworthy of a good character: he abetted vice and vanity only with his pen. One of his enemies has accused him of lewdness in his conversation; but, if accusation without proof be credited, who shall be innocent?

His works afford too many examples of dissolute licentiousness and abject adulation; but they were, probably, like his merriment, artificial and constrained; the effects of study and meditation, and his trade rather than his pleasure.

Of the mind that can trade in corruption, and can deliberately pollute itself with ideal wickedness, for the sake of spreading the contagion in society, I wish not to conceal or excuse the depravity. Such degradation of the dignity of genius, such abuse of superlative abilities, cannot be contemplated but with grief and indignation. What consolation can be had, Dryden has afforded, by living to repent, and to testify his repentance.

Of dramatick immorality he did not want examples among his predecessors, or companions among his contemporaries; but, in the meanness and servility of hyperbolical adulation, I know not whether, since the days in which the Roman emperours were deified, he has been ever equalled, except by Afra

Behn, in an address to Eleanor Gwyn. When once he has undertaken the task of praise, he no longer retains shame in himself, nor supposes it in his patron. As many odoriferous bodies are observed to diffuse perfumes, from year to year, without sensible diminution of bulk or weight, he appears never to have impoverished his mint of flattery by his expenses, however lavish. He had all the forms of excellence, intellectual and moral, combined in his mind, with endless variation; and, when he had scattered on the hero of the day the golden shower of wit and virtue, he had ready for him whom he wished to court on the morrow, new wit and virtue with another stamp. Of this kind of meanness he never seems to decline the practice, or lament the necessity: he considers the great as entitled to encomiastick homage, and brings praise rather as a tribute than a gift, more delighted with the fertility of his invention, than mortified by the prostitution of his judgment. It is, indeed, not certain, that on these occasions his judgment much rebelled against his interest. There are minds which easily sink into submission, that look on grandeur with undistinguishing reverence, and discover no defect where there is elevation of rank and affluence of riches.

With his praises of others, and of himself, is always intermingled a strain of discontent and lamentation, a sullen growl of resentment, or a querulous murmur of distress. His works are undervalued, his merit is unrewarded, and "he has few thanks to pay his stars that he was born among Englishmen." To

his criticks he is sometimes contemptuous, sometimes resentful, and sometimes submissive. The writer who thinks his works formed for duration, mistakes his interest when he mentions his enemies. He degrades his own dignity by showing that he was affected by their censures, and gives lasting importance to names, which, left to themselves, would vanish from remembrance. From this principle Dryden did not often depart; his complaints are, for the greater part, general; he seldom pollutes his page with an adverse name. He condescended, indeed, to a controversy with Settle, in which he, perhaps, may be considered rather as assaulting than repelling; and since Settle is sunk into oblivion, his libel remains injurious only to himself.

Among answers to criticks, no poetical attacks, or altercations, are to be included; they are, like other poems, effusions of genius, produced as much to obtain praise as to obviate censure. These Dryden practised, and in these he excelled.

Of Collier, Blackmore, and Milbourne, he has made mention in the preface to his Fables. To the censure of Collier, whose remarks may be rather termed admonitions than criticisms, he makes little reply; being, at the age of sixty-eight, attentive to better things than the claps of a playhouse. He complains of Collier's rudeness, and the "horseplay of his raillery;" and asserts, that "in many places he has perverted by his glosses the meaning" of what he censures; but in other things he confesses that he is justly taxed; and says, with great calmness and

candour, "I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts or expressions of mine that can be truly accused of obscenity, immorality, or profaneness, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, he will be glad of my repentance." Yet, as our best dispositions are imperfect, he left standing in the same book a reflection on Collier of great asperity, and, indeed, of more asperity than wit.

Blackmore he represents as made his enemy by the poem of Absalom and Achitopel, which "he thinks a little hard upon his fanatick patrons;" and charges him with borrowing the plan of his Arthur from the preface to Juvenal, "though he had," says he, "the baseness not to acknowledge his benefactor, but instead of it to traduce me in a libel."

The libel in which Blackmore traduced him, was a Satire upon Wit; in which, having lamented the exuberance of false wit, and the deficiency of true, he proposes that all wit should be recoined before it is current, and appoints masters of assay who shall reject all that is light or debased:

> 'Tis true, that, when the coarse and worthless dross
> Is purg'd away, there will be mighty loss:
> E'en Congreve, Southern, manly Wycherley,
> When thus refin'd, will grievous sufferers be;
> Into the melting-pot when Dryden comes,
> What horrid stench will rise, what noisome fumes!
> How will he shrink, when all his lewd allay,
> And wicked mixture, shall be purg'd away!

Thus stands the passage in the last edition; but in the original there was an abatement of the censure, beginning thus:

> But what remains will be so pure, 'twill bear
> Th' examination of the most severe.

Blackmore, finding the censure resented, and the civility disregarded, ungenerously omitted the softer part. Such variations discover a writer who consults his passions more than his virtue; and it may be reasonably supposed that Dryden imputes his enmity to its true cause.

Of Milbourne he wrote only in general terms, such as are always ready at the call of anger, whether just or not: a short extract will be sufficient. "He pretends a quarrel to me, that I have fallen foul upon priesthood; if I have, I am only to ask pardon of good priests, and am afraid his share of the reparation will come to little. Let him be satisfied that he shall never be able to force himself upon me for an adversary; I contemn him too much to enter into competition with him.

"As for the rest of those who have written against me, they are such scoundrels that they deserve not the least notice to be taken of them. Blackmore and Milbourne are only distinguished from the crowd by being remembered to their infamy."

Dryden, indeed, discovered, in many of his writings, an affected and absurd malignity to priests and priesthood, which naturally raised him many enemies, and which was sometimes as unseasonably resented as it was exerted. Trapp is angry that he calls the sacrificer in the Georgicks "the holy butcher:" the translation is, indeed, ridiculous; but Trapp's anger arises from his zeal, not for the author, but the priest; as if any reproach of the follies of paganism could be extended to the preachers of truth.

Dryden's dislike of the priesthood is imputed by Langbaine, and, I think, by Brown, to a repulse which he suffered when he solicited ordination; but he denies, in the preface to his Fables, that he ever designed to enter into the church; and such a denial he would not have hazarded, if he could have been convicted of falsehood.

Malevolence to the clergy is seldom at a great distance from irreverence of religion, and Dryden affords no exception to this observation. His writings exhibit many passages, which, with all the allowance that can be made for characters and occasions, are such as piety would not have admitted, and such as may vitiate light and unprincipled minds. But there is no reason for supposing that he disbelieved the religion which he disobeyed. He forgot his duty rather than disowned it. His tendency to profaneness is the effect of levity, negligence, and loose conversation, with a desire of accommodating himself to the corruption of the times, by venturing to be wicked as far as he durst. When he professed himself a convert to popery, he did not pretend to have received any new conviction of the fundamental doctrines of christianity.

The persecution of criticks was not the worst of his vexations; he was much more disturbed by the importunities of want. His complaints of poverty are so frequently repeated, either with the dejection of weakness sinking in helpless misery, or the indignation of merit claiming its tribute from mankind, that it is impossible not to detest the age which

could impose on such a man the necessity of such solicitations, or not to despise the man who could submit to such solicitations without necessity.

Whether by the world's neglect, or his own imprudence, I am afraid that the greatest part of his life was passed in exigencies. Such outcries were, surely, never uttered but in severe pain. Of his supplies or his expenses no probable estimate can now be made. Except the salary of the laureate, to which king James added the office of historiographer, perhaps with some additional emoluments, his whole revenue seems to have been casual; and it is well known that he seldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal; and they that trust her promises make little scruple of revelling to-day on the profits of the morrow.

Of his plays the profit was not great; and of the produce of his other works very little intelligence can be had. By discoursing with the late amiable Mr. Tonson, I could not find that any memorials of the transactions between his predecessor and Dryden had been preserved, except the following papers:

"I do hereby promise to pay John Dryden, esq. or order, on the 25th of March, 1699, the sum of two hundred and fifty guineas, in consideration of ten thousand verses, which the said John Dryden, esq. is to deliver to me, Jacob Tonson, when finished, whereof seven thousand five hundred verses, more or less, are already in the said Jacob Tonson's possession. And I do hereby further promise and engage myself, to make up the said sum of two hundred

and fifty guineas three hundred pounds sterling to the said John Dryden, esq. his executors, administrators, or assigns, at the beginning of the second impression of the said ten thousand verses.

"In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this 20th day of March, 1698–9.

"JACOB TONSON.

"Sealed and delivered, being first duly stampt, pursuant to the acts of parliament for that purpose, in the presence of

"BEN. PORTLOCK,

"WILL. CONGREVE."

"March 24, 1698.

"Received then of Mr. Jacob Tonson the sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings, in pursuance of an agreement for ten thousand verses, to be delivered by me to the said Jacob Tonson, whereof I have already delivered to him about seven thousand five hundred, more or less; he, the said Jacob Tonson, being obliged to make up the foresaid sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings three hundred pounds, at the beginning of the second impression of the foresaid ten thousand verses;

"I say, received by me,

"JOHN DRYDEN.

"Witness, CHARLES DRYDEN."

Two hundred and fifty guineas, at 1*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.* is 268*l.* 15*s.*

It is manifest, from the dates of this contract, that it relates to the volume of Fables, which contains about twelve thousand verses, and for which, therefore, the payment must have been afterwards enlarged.

I have been told of another letter yet remaining, in which he desires Tonson to bring him money, to pay for a watch which he had ordered for his son, and which the maker would not leave without the price.

The inevitable consequence of poverty is dependence. Dryden had probably no recourse in his exigencies but to his bookseller. The particular character of Tonson I do not know; but the general conduct of traders was much less liberal in those times than in our own; their views were narrower, and their manners grosser. To the mercantile ruggedness of that race, the delicacy of the poet was sometimes exposed. Lord Bolingbroke, who in his youth had cultivated poetry, related to Dr. King, of Oxford, that one day, when he visited Dryden, they heard, as they were conversing, another person entering the house. "This," said Dryden, "is Tonson. You will take care not to depart before he goes away; for I have not completed the sheet which I promised him; and if you leave me unprotected, I must suffer all the rudeness to which his resentment can prompt his tongue."

What rewards he obtained for his poems, besides the payment of the bookseller, cannot be known. Mr. Derrick, who consulted some of his relations,

was informed that his Fables obtained five hundred pounds from the dutchess of Ormond; a present not unsuitable to the magnificence of that splendid family; and he quotes Moyle, as relating that forty pounds were paid by a musical society for the use of Alexander's Feast.

In those days the economy of government was yet unsettled, and the payments of the exchequer were dilatory and uncertain: of this disorder there is reason to believe that the laureate sometimes felt the effects; for, in one of his prefaces he complains of those, who, being intrusted with the distribution of the prince's bounty, suffer those that depend upon it to languish in penury.

Of his petty habits or slight amusements, tradition has retained little. Of the only two men, whom I have found, to whom he was personally known, one told me, that at the house which he frequented, called Will's Coffee-house, the appeal upon any literary dispute was made to him; and the other related, that his armed chair, which in the winter had a settled and prescriptive place by the fire, was in the summer placed in the balcony, and that he called the two places his winter and his summer seat. This is all the intelligence which his two survivors afforded me.

One of his opinions will do him no honour in the present age, though in his own time, at least in the beginning of it, he was far from having it confined to himself. He put great confidence in the prognostications of judicial astrology. In the appendix to

the Life of Congreve is a narrative of some of his predictions wonderfully fulfilled; but I know not the writer's means of information, or character of veracity. That he had the configurations of the horoscope in his mind, and considered them as influencing the affairs of men, he does not forbear to hint:

> The utmost malice of the stars is past.
> Now frequent *trines* the happier lights among,
> And *high-rais'd Jove*, from his dark prison freed,
> Those weights took off that on his planet hung,
> Will gloriously the new-laid works succeed.

He has, elsewhere, shown his attention to the planetary powers; and, in the preface to his Fables, has endeavoured obliquely to justify his superstition, by attributing the same to some of the ancients. The letter, added to this narrative, leaves no doubt of his notions or practice.

So slight and so scanty is the knowledge which I have been able to collect concerning the private life and domestick manners of a man whom every English generation must mention with reverence as a critick and a poet.

Dryden may be properly considered as the father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition. Of our former poets, the greatest dramatist wrote without rules, conducted through life and nature by a genius that rarely misled, and rarely deserted him. Of the rest, those who knew the laws of propriety had neglected to teach them.

Two Arts of English Poetry were written in the days of Elizabeth by Webb and Puttenham, from which something might be learned, and a few hints had been given by Jonson and Cowley; but Dryden's Essay on Dramatick Poetry was the first regular and valuable treatise on the art of writing.

He who, having formed his opinions in the present age of English literature, turns back to peruse this dialogue, will not, perhaps, find much increase of knowledge, or much novelty of instruction; but he is to remember that critical principles were then in the hands of a few, who had gathered them partly from the ancients, and partly from the Italians and French. The structure of dramatick poems was not then generally understood. Audiences applauded by instinct, and poets, perhaps, often pleased by chance.

A writer who obtains his full purpose loses himself in his own lustre. Of an opinion which is no longer doubted, the evidence ceases to be examined. Of an art universally practised, the first teacher is forgotten. Learning once made popular is no longer learning; it has the appearance of something which we have bestowed upon ourselves, as the dew appears to rise from the field which it refreshes.

To judge rightly of an author, we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them. That which is easy at one time was difficult at another. Dryden at least imported his science, and gave his country what it

wanted before; or rather, he imported only the materials, and manufactured them by his own skill.

The Dialogue on the Drama was one of his first essays of criticism, written when he was yet a timorous candidate for reputation, and, therefore, laboured with that diligence which he might allow himself somewhat to remit, when his name gave sanction to his positions, and his awe of the publick was abated, partly by custom, and partly by success. It will not be easy to find, in all the opulence of our language, a treatise so artfully variegated with successive representations of opposite probabilities, so enlivened with imagery, so brightened with illustrations. His portraits of the English dramatists are wrought with great spirit and diligence. The account of Shakespeare may stand as a perpetual model of encomiastick criticism; exact without minuteness, and lofty without exaggeration. The praise lavished by Longinus, on the attestation of the heroes of Marathon by Demosthenes, fades away before it. In a few lines is exhibited a character, so extensive in its comprehension, and so curious in its limitations, that nothing can be added, diminished, or reformed; nor can the editors and admirers of Shakespeare, in all their emulation of reverence, boast of much more than of having diffused and paraphrased this epitome of excellence, of having changed Dryden's gold for baser metal, of lower value though of greater bulk.

In this, and in all his other essays on the same subject, the criticism of Dryden is the criticism of

a poet; not a dull collection of theorems, nor a rude detection of faults, which, perhaps, the censor was not able to have committed; but a gay and vigorous dissertation, where delight is mingled with instruction, and where the author proves his right of judgment by his power of performance.

The different manner and effect with which critical knowledge may be conveyed, was, perhaps, never more clearly exemplified than in the performances of Rymer and Dryden. It was said of a dispute between two mathematicians, "malim cum Scaligero errare, quam cum Clavio recte sapere;" that "it was more eligible to go wrong with one, than right with the other." A tendency of the same kind every mind must feel at the perusal of Dryden's prefaces and Rymer's discourses. With Dryden we are wandering in quest of truth; whom we find, if we find her at all, drest in the graces of elegance; and, if we miss her, the labour of the pursuit rewards itself; we are led only through fragrance and flowers. Rymer, without taking a nearer, takes a rougher way; every step is to be made through thorns and brambles; and truth, if we meet her, appears repulsive by her mien, and ungraceful by her habit. Dryden's criticism has the majesty of a queen; Rymer's has the ferocity of a tyrant.

As he had studied with great diligence the art of poetry, and enlarged or rectified his notions, by experience perpetually increasing, he had his mind stored with principles and observations; he poured out his knowledge with little labour; for of labour,

notwithstanding the multiplicity of his productions, there is sufficient reason to suspect that he was not a lover. To write *con amore*, with fondness for the employment, with perpetual touches and retouches, with unwillingness to take leave of his own idea, and an unwearied pursuit of unattainable perfection, was, I think, no part of his character.

His criticism may be considered as general or occasional. In his general precepts, which depend upon the nature of things, and the structure of the human mind, he may, doubtless, be safely recommended to the confidence of the reader; but his occasional and particular positions were sometimes interested, sometimes negligent, and sometimes capricious. It is not without reason that Trapp, speaking of the praises which he bestows on Palamon and Arcite, says, "Novimus judicium Drydeni de poemate quodam Chauceri, pulchro sane illo, et admodum laudando, nimirum quod non modo vere epicum sit, sed Iliada etiam atque Æneada æquet, imo superet. Sed novimus eodem tempore viri illius maximi non semper accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissimam critices normam exactas: illo judice id plerumque optimum est, quod nunc præ manibus habet, et in quo nunc occupatur."

He is, therefore, by no means constant to himself. His defence and desertion of dramatick rhyme is generally known. Spence, in his remarks on Pope's Odyssey, produces what he thinks an unconquerable quotation from Dryden's preface to the Æneid, in favour of translating an epick poem into blank

verse; but he forgets that when his author attempted the Iliad, some years afterwards, he departed from his own decision, and translated into rhyme.

When he has any objection to obviate, or any license to defend, he is not very scrupulous about what he asserts, nor very cautious, if the present purpose be served, not to entangle himself in his own sophistries. But, when all arts are exhausted, like other hunted animals, he sometimes stands at bay; when he cannot disown the grossness of one of his plays, he declares that he knows not any law that prescribes morality to a comick poet.

His remarks on ancient or modern writers are not always to be trusted. His parallel of the versification of Ovid with that of Claudian has been very justly censured by Sewel[u]. His comparison of the first line of Virgil with the first of Statius is not happier. Virgil, he says, is soft and gentle, and would have thought Statius mad, if he had heard him thundering out:

Quæ superimposito moles geminata colosso.

Statius, perhaps, heats himself, as he proceeds, to exaggerations somewhat hyperbolical; but undoubtedly Virgil would have been too hasty, if he had condemned him to straw for one sounding line. Dryden wanted an instance, and the first that occurred was imprest into the service.

What he wishes to say, he says at hazard; he cited Gorbuduc, which he had never seen; gives a false account of Chapman's versification; and dis-

[u] Preface to Ovid's Metamorphoses. Dr. J.

covers, in the preface to his Fables, that he translated the first book of the Iliad without knowing what was in the second.

It will be difficult to prove that Dryden ever made any great advances in literature. As, having distinguished himself at Westminster under the tuition of Busby, who advanced his scholars to a height of knowledge very rarely attained in grammar-schools, he resided afterwards at Cambridge, it is not to be supposed, that his skill in the ancient languages was deficient, compared with that of common students; but his scholastick acquisitions seem not proportionate to his opportunities and abilities. He could not, like Milton or Cowley, have made his name illustrious merely by his learning. He mentions but few books, and those such as lie in the beaten track of regular study; from which, if ever he departs, he is in danger of losing himself in unknown regions.

In his Dialogue on the Drama, he pronounces, with great confidence, that the Latin tragedy of Medea is not Ovid's, because it is not sufficiently interesting and pathetick. He might have determined the question upon surer evidence; for it is quoted by Quintilian as the work of Seneca; and the only line which remains of Ovid's play, for one line is left us, is not there to be found. There was, therefore, no need of the gravity of conjecture, or the discussion of plot or sentiment, to find what was already known upon higher authority than such discussions can ever reach.

His literature, though not always free from ostentation, will be commonly found either obvious, and made his own by the art of dressing it; or superficial, which, by what he gives, shows what he wanted; or erroneous, hastily collected, and negligently scattered.

Yet it cannot be said that his genius is ever unprovided of matter, or that his fancy languishes in penury of ideas. His works abound with knowledge, and sparkle with illustrations. There is scarcely any science or faculty that does not supply him with occasional images and lucky similitudes; every page discovers a mind very widely acquainted both with art and nature, and in full possession of great stores of intellectual wealth. Of him that knows much, it is natural to suppose that he has read with diligence; yet I rather believe that the knowledge of Dryden was gleaned from accidental intelligence and various conversation, by a quick apprehension, a judicious selection, and a happy memory, a keen appetite of knowledge, and a powerful digestion; by vigilance that permitted nothing to pass without notice, and a habit of reflection that suffered nothing useful to be lost. A mind like Dryden's, always curious, always active, to which every understanding was proud to be associated, and of which every one solicited the regard, by an ambitious display of himself, had a more pleasant, perhaps a nearer way to knowledge than by the silent progress of solitary reading. I do not suppose that he despised books, or intentionally neglected them; but that he was

carried out, by the impetuosity of his genius, to more vivid and speedy instructers; and that his studies were rather desultory and fortuitous than constant and systematical.

It must be confessed, that he scarcely ever appears to want book-learning, but when he mentions books; and to him may be transferred the praise which he gives his master Charles:

> His conversation, wit, and parts,
> His knowledge in the noblest useful arts,
> Were such, dead authors could not give,
> But habitudes of those that live,
> Who, lighting him, did greater lights receive:
> He drained from all, and all they knew,
> His apprehensions quick, his judgment true:
> That the most learn'd with shame confess,
> His knowledge more, his reading only less.

Of all this, however, if the proof be demanded, I will not undertake to give it; the atoms of probability, of which my opinion has been formed, lie scattered over all his works; and by him who thinks the question worth his notice, his works must be perused with very close attention.

Criticism, either didactick or defensive, occupies almost all his prose, except those pages which he has devoted to his patrons; but none of his prefaces were ever thought tedious. They have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled; every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little,

is gay; what is great, is splendid. He may be thought to mention himself too frequently; but, while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own. Every thing is excused by the play of images, and the sprightliness of expression. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh; and though since his earlier works more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete.

He who writes much will not easily escape a manner, such a recurrence of particular modes as may be easily noted. Dryden is always "another and the same;" he does not exhibit a second time the same elegancies in the same form, nor appears to have any art other than that of expressing with clearness what he thinks with vigour. His style could not easily be imitated, either seriously or ludicrously; for, being always equable and always varied, it has no prominent or discriminative characters. The beauty who is totally free from disproportion of parts and features, cannot be ridiculed by an overcharged resemblance.

From his prose, however, Dryden derives only his accidental and secondary praise; the veneration with which his name is pronounced by every cultivator of English literature, is paid to him as he refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers of English poetry.

After about half a century of forced thoughts, and rugged metre, some advances towards nature

and harmony had been already made by Waller and Denham; they had shown that long discourses in rhyme grew more pleasing when they were broken into couplets, and that verse consisted not only in the number but the arrangement of syllables.

But though they did much, who can deny that they left much to do? Their works were not many, nor were their minds of very ample comprehension. More examples of more modes of composition were necessary for the establishment of regularity, and the introduction of propriety in word and thought.

Every language of a learned nation necessarily divides itself into diction scholastick and popular, grave and familiar, elegant and gross: and from a nice distinction of these different parts arises a great part of the beauty of style. But if we except a few minds, the favourites of nature, to whom their own original rectitude was in the place of rules, this delicacy of selection was little known to our authors; our speech lay before them in a heap of confusion, and every man took for every purpose, what chance might offer him.

There was, therefore, before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestick use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet. From those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions, we do not easily receive strong impressions, or delightful images; and words to which we are nearly strangers,

whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit to things.

Those happy combinations of words which distinguish poetry from prose had been rarely attempted; we had few elegancies or flowers of speech; the roses had not yet been plucked from the bramble; or different colours had not been joined to enliven one another.

It may be doubted whether Waller and Denham could have overborne the prejudices which had long prevailed, and which even then were sheltered by the protection of Cowley. The new versification, as it was called, may be considered as owing its establishment to Dryden; from whose time it is apparent that English poetry has had no tendency to relapse to its former savageness.

The affluence and comprehension of our language is very illustriously displayed in our poetical translations of ancient writers; a work which the French seem to relinquish in despair, and which we were long unable to perform with dexterity. Ben Jonson thought it necessary to copy Horace almost word by word; Feltham, his contemporary and adversary, considers it as indispensably requisite in a translation to give line for line. It is said that Sandys, whom Dryden calls the best versifier of the last age, has struggled hard to comprise every book of his English Metamorphoses in the same number of verses with the original. Holyday had nothing in view but to show that he understood his author, with so little regard to the grandeur of his diction, or the volubility

of his numbers, that his metres can hardly be called verses; they cannot be read without reluctance, nor will the labour always be rewarded by understanding them. Cowley saw that such copyers were a servile race; he asserted his liberty, and spread his wings so boldly that he left his authors. It was reserved for Dryden to fix the limits of poetical liberty, and give us just rules and examples of translation.

When languages are formed upon different principles, it is impossible that the same modes of expression should always be elegant in both. While they run on together, the closest translation may be considered as the best; but when they divaricate, each must take its natural course. Where correspondence cannot be obtained, it is necessary to be content with something equivalent. "Translation, therefore," says Dryden, "is not so loose as paraphrase, nor so close as metaphrase."

All polished languages have different styles; the concise, the diffuse, the lofty, and the humble. In the proper choice of style consists the resemblance which Dryden principally exacts from the translator. He is to exhibit his author's thoughts in such a dress of diction as the author would have given them, had his language been English; rugged magnificence is not to be softened; hyperbolical ostentation is not to be repressed; nor sententious affectation to have its point blunted. A translator is to be like his author; it is not his business to excel him.

The reasonableness of these rules seems sufficient for their vindication; and the effects produced by

observing them were so happy, that I know not whether they were ever opposed, but by sir Edward Sherburne, a man whose learning was greater than his powers of poetry, and who, being better qualified to give the meaning than the spirit of Seneca, has introduced his version of three tragedies by a defence of close translation. The authority of Horace, which the new translators cited in defence of their practice, he has, by a judicious explanation, taken fairly from them; but reason wants not Horace to support it.

It seldom happens that all the necessary causes concur to any great effect: will is wanting to power, or power to will, or both are impeded by external obstructions. The exigencies in which Dryden was condemned to pass his life, are reasonably supposed to have blasted his genius, to have driven out his works in a state of immaturity, and to have intercepted the full-blown elegance, which longer growth would have supplied.

Poverty, like other rigid powers, is sometimes too hastily accused. If the excellence of Dryden's works was lessened by his indigence, their number was increased; and I know not how it will be proved, that if he had written less he would have written better; or that, indeed, he would have undergone the toil of an author, if he had not been solicited by something more pressing than the love of praise.

But, as is said by his Sebastian,

> What had been, is unknown; what is, appears.

We know that Dryden's several productions were

so many successive expedients for his support; his plays were, therefore, often borrowed; and his poems were almost all occasional.

In an occasional performance no height of excellence can be expected from any mind, however fertile in itself, and however stored with acquisitions. He whose work is general and arbitrary has the choice of his matter, and takes that which his inclination and his studies have best qualified him to display and decorate. He is at liberty to delay his publication till he has satisfied his friends and himself, till he has reformed his first thoughts by subsequent examination, and polished away those faults which the precipitance of ardent composition is likely to leave behind it. Virgil is related to have poured out a great number of lines in the morning, and to have passed the day in reducing them to fewer.

The occasional poet is circumscribed by the narrowness of his subject. Whatever can happen to man has happened so often, that little remains for fancy or invention. We have been all born; we have most of us been married; and so many have died before us, that our deaths can supply but few materials for a poet. In the fate of princes the publick has an interest; and what happens to them of good or evil, the poets have always considered as business for the muse. But after so many inauguratory gratulations, nuptial hymns, and funeral dirges, he must be highly favoured by nature, or by fortune, who says any thing not said before. Even war and conquest, however splendid, suggest no new images; the triumphal

chariot of a victorious monarch can be decked only with those ornaments that have graced his predecessors.

Not only matter but time is wanting. The poem must not be delayed till the occasion is forgotten. The lucky moments of animated imagination cannot be attended; elegancies and illustrations cannot be multiplied by gradual accumulation; the composition must be despatched, while conversation is yet busy, and admiration fresh; and haste is to be made, lest some other event should lay hold upon mankind.

Occasional compositions may, however, secure to a writer the praise both of learning and facility; for they cannot be the effect of long study, and must be furnished immediately from the treasures of the mind.

The death of Cromwell was the first publick event which called forth Dryden's poetical powers. His heroick stanzas have beauties and defects; the thoughts are vigorous, and, though not always proper, show a mind replete with ideas; the numbers are smooth; and the diction, if not altogether correct, is elegant and easy.

Davenant was, perhaps, at this time, his favourite author, though Gondibert never appears to have been popular; and from Davenant he learned to please his ear with the stanza of four lines alternately rhymed.

Dryden very early formed his versification; there are in this early production no traces of Donne's or Jonson's ruggedness; but he did not so soon free his mind from the ambition of forced conceits. In

his verses on the restoration, he says of the king's exile:

> He, toss'd by fate,
> Could taste no sweets of youth's desir'd age,
> But found his life too true a pilgrimage.

And afterwards, to show how virtue and wisdom are increased by adversity, he makes this remark:

> Well might the ancient poets then confer
> On night the honour'd name of counsellor:
> Since, struck with rays of prosperous fortune blind,
> We light alone in dark afflictions find.

His praise of Monk's dexterity comprises such a cluster of thoughts unallied to one another, as will not elsewhere be easily found:

> 'Twas Monk, whom providence design'd to loose
> Those real bonds false freedom did impose.
> The blessed saints that watch'd this turning scene
> Did from their stars with joyful wonder lean,
> To see small clues draw vastest weights along,
> Not in their bulk, but in their order strong.
> Thus pencils can by one slight touch restore
> Smiles to that changed face that wept before.
> With ease such fond chimeras we pursue,
> As fancy frames for fancy to subdue;
> But, when ourselves to action we betake,
> It shuns the mint like gold that chymists make:
> How hard was then his task, at once to be
> What in the body natural we see!
> Man's architect distinctly did ordain
> The charge of muscles, nerves, and of the brain,
> Through viewless conduits spirits to dispense
> The springs of motion from the seat of sense:
> 'Twas not the hasty product of a day,
> But the well-ripen'd fruit of wise delay.
> He, like a patient angler, ere he strook,
> Would let them play awhile upon the hook.
> Our healthful food the stomach labours thus,
> At first embracing what it straight doth crush.

Wise leeches will not vain receipts obtrude,
While growing pains pronounce the humours crude;
Deaf to complaints, they wait upon the ill,
Till some safe crisis authorize their skill.

He had not yet learned, indeed he never learned well, to forbear the improper use of mythology. After having rewarded the heathen deities for their care,

With Alga who the sacred altar strows?
To all the seagods Charles an offering owes;
A bull to thee, Portunus, shall be slain;
A ram to you, ye tempests of the main.

He tells us, in the language of religion,

Pray'r storm'd the skies, and ravish'd Charles from thence,
As heav'n itself is took by violence.

And afterwards mentions one of the most awful passages of sacred history.

Other conceits there are, too curious to be quite omitted; as,

For by example most we sinn'd before,
And, glass-like, clearness mix'd with frailty bore.

How far he was yet from thinking it necessary to found his sentiments on nature, appears from the extravagance of his fictions and hyperboles:

The winds, that never moderation knew,
Afraid to blow too much, too faintly blew;
Or, out of breath with joy, could not enlarge
Their straiten'd lungs.

It is no longer motion cheats your view;
As you meet it, the land approacheth you;
The land returns, and in the white it wears
The marks of penitence and sorrow bears.

I know not whether this fancy, however little be its value, was not borrowed. A French poet read

to Malherbe some verses, in which he represents France as moving out of its place to receive the king: "Though this," said Malherbe, "was in my time, I do not remember it."

His poem on the Coronation has a more even tenour of thought. Some lines deserve to be quoted:

> You have already quench'd sedition's brand;
> And zeal, that burnt it, only warms the land;
> The jealous sects that durst not trust their cause
> So far from their own will as to the laws,
> Him for their umpire and their synod take,
> And their appeal alone to Cæsar make.

Here may be found one particle of that old versification, of which, I believe, in all his works, there is not another:

> Nor is it duty, or our hope alone,
> Creates that joy, but full *fruition*.

In the verses to the lord chancellor Clarendon, two years afterwards, is a conceit so hopeless at the first view, that few would have attempted it; and so successfully laboured, that though, at last, it gives the reader more perplexity than pleasure, and seems hardly worth the study that it costs, yet it must be valued as a proof of a mind at once subtile and comprehensive:

> In open prospect nothing bounds our eye,
> Until the earth seems join'd unto the sky;
> So in this hemisphere our utmost view
> Is only bounded by our king and you:
> Our sight is limited where you are join'd,
> And beyond that no farther heaven can find.
> So well your virtues do with his agree,
> That, though your orbs of different greatness be,
> Yet both are for each other's use dispos'd,
> His to enclose, and yours to be enclos'd.
> Nor could another in your room have been,
> Except an emptiness had come between.

The comparison of the chancellor to the Indies leaves all resemblance too far behind it:

> And as the Indies were not found before
> Those rich perfumes which from the happy shore
> The winds upon their balmy wings convey'd,
> Whose guilty sweetness first their world betray'd;
> So by your counsels we are brought to view
> A new and undiscover'd world in you.

There is another comparison, for there is little else in the poem, of which, though, perhaps, it cannot be explained into plain prosaic meaning, the mind perceives enough to be delighted, and readily forgives its obscurity, for its magnificence:

> How strangely active are the arts of peace,
> Whose restless motions less than wars do cease:
> Peace is not freed from labour, but from noise;
> And war more force, but not more pains employs.
> Such is the mighty swiftness of your mind,
> That, like the earth's, it leaves our sense behind,
> While you so smoothly turn and roll our sphere,
> That rapid motion does but rest appear.
> For as in nature's swiftness, with the throng
> Of flying orbs while ours is borne along,
> All seems at rest to the deluded eye,
> Mov'd by the soul of the same harmony:
> So, carry'd on by your unwearied care,
> We rest in peace, and yet in motion share.

To this succeed four lines, which, perhaps, afford Dryden's first attempt at those penetrating remarks on human nature, for which he seems to have been peculiarly formed:

> Let envy then those crimes within you see,
> From which the happy never must be free;
> Envy that does with misery reside,
> The joy and the revenge of ruin'd pride.

Into this poem he seems to have collected all his

powers; and after this he did not often bring upon his anvil such stubborn and unmalleable thoughts; but, as a specimen of his abilities to unite the most unsociable matter, he has concluded with lines, of which I think not myself obliged to tell the meaning:

> Yet unimpair'd with labours, or with time,
> Your age but seems to a new youth to climb.
> Thus heav'nly bodies do our time beget,
> And measure change, but share no part of it:
> And still it shall without a weight increase,
> Like this new year, whose motions never cease.
> For since the glorious course you have begun
> Is led by Charles, as that is by the sun,
> It must both weightless and immortal prove,
> Because the centre of it is above.

In the Annus Mirabilis he returned to the quatrain, which from that time he totally quitted, perhaps from experience of its inconvenience, for he complains of its difficulty. This is one of his greatest attempts. He had subjects equal to his abilities, a great naval war, and the fire of London. Battles have always been described in heroick poetry; but a seafight and artillery had yet something of novelty. New arts are long in the world before poets describe them; for they borrow every thing from their predecessors, and commonly derive very little from nature, or from life. Boileau was the first French writer that had ever hazarded in verse the mention of modern war, or the effects of gunpowder. We, who are less afraid of novelty, had already possession of those dreadful images: Waller had described a seafight. Milton had not yet transferred the invention of fire-arms to the rebellious angels.

This poem is written with great diligence, yet does not fully answer the expectation raised by such subjects and such a writer. With the stanza of Davenant, he has sometimes his vein of parenthesis, and incidental disquisition, and stops his narrative for a wise remark.

The general fault is, that he affords more sentiment than description, and does not so much impress scenes upon the fancy, as deduce consequences and make comparisons.

The initial stanzas have rather too much resemblance to the first lines of Waller's poem on the War with Spain; perhaps such a beginning is natural, and could not be avoided without affectation. Both Waller and Dryden might take their hint from the poem on the civil war of Rome: "Orbem jam totum," &c.

Of the king collecting his navy, he says,

> It seems, as ev'ry ship their sov'reign knows,
> His awful summons they so soon obey:
> So hear the scaly herds when Proteus blows,
> And so to pasture follow through the sea.

It would not be hard to believe that Dryden had written the two first lines seriously, and that some wag had added the two latter in burlesque. Who would expect the lines that immediately follow, which are, indeed, perhaps indecently hyperbolical, but certainly in a mode totally different:

> To see this fleet upon the ocean move,
> Angels drew wide the curtains of the skies;
> And heav'n, as if there wanted lights above,
> For tapers made two glaring comets rise.



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